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NEA Today

WASHINGTON, D.C. MARCH 1988

A NEWSPAPER FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION VOL. 6, NO. 8

ASIAN AMERICANS
Beyond the 'Whiz Kid' Image

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PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

National Dishonesty

The year was 1973. The social issue that loomed large was then, as now, educational. Attention centered on student *pushouts*.

What became of that word? It's been years—maybe a decade—since I last heard it used. My newest dictionary doesn't list it.

That omission may be revealing. For when a pivotal term vanishes from a debate of critical importance, chances are that the nature of the debate has shifted. Toward a more enlightened level? I have my doubts.

Let me explain.

"The thousands of students pushed out of school by in-school discrimination demand and must have relief."

The Southern Regional Council and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial issued this call to action in 1973. Their report—*The Student Pushout: Victim of Continued Resistance to Desegregation*—charged that school districts had created a new category of classroom exile.

"Undesirable" students, the report stated, were often sent packing by school officials who played fast and loose with guidelines for expulsion and suspension. In many schools these guidelines had become no more than means to subvert the ideal of equal educational opportunity.

The controversy ignited by this report and others—including NEA's *Student Displacement/Exclusion: Violations of Human and Civil Rights*—came to a head with two 1975 Supreme Court rulings.

Taken together, *Goss v. Lopez* and *Wood v. Strickland* served notice that school boards could be held liable for violating a student's constitutional rights. Expulsion or long-term suspension without a hearing, the Court held,

Joe Di Dio

NEA President
Mary Hatwood Futrell

violated the due process clause of the 14th amendment to the Constitution.

These rulings solved little. The pushing continued, albeit more subtly. If it was now harder to dismiss students, it was still possible to make the schooling experience so frustrating, so painful, so humiliating, that students dismissed themselves. The most frequent victims were now students whose primary language was not English.

Further remedy was necessary. And strict enforcement of *Lau v. Nichols* offered that remedy. In *Lau*, the High Court had ruled that denying equal educational opportunity because of language barriers constituted discrimination on the basis of national origin. The Court mandated an *appropriate educational program* for linguistic minority students.

With these developments, many believed the pushout syndrome had been brought to a halt. If so, the solution proved temporary.

Today we are witness to a resurgence of practices that push students toward the school exit. The *Lau* decision is being subverted. And I submit that if we are to solve—to truly *understand*—the current dropout crisis, we must reclaim the term *pushout*. We must recognize that the schooling experience alienates and ultimately exiles thousands of linguistic minority students.

Of course, we are often told that curricula can work, even without accommodations to linguistic minority students. In a way, that's true. They work to convince these students that they don't have what it takes to succeed in school. And this diagnosis often becomes a prognosis—a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students come to doubt their abilities. The doubt becomes all-consuming. From that time forward, every moment in the classroom is a moment when self-confidence is translated into self-contempt.

When these students can no longer endure messages that erode their self-esteem and demean their native heritage, they seek escape.

We add these students to the dropout statistics. They don't belong there. They're pushouts. And only when we're honest enough to call them pushouts will we begin to solve their problem. To solve *our* problem. □

TRENDS

Mathematicians: Rare Birds Indeed!

Is the American mathematician going the way of the bald eagle? That's the view of University of Massachusetts professor Edward A. Connors, who counted the number of U.S. citizens earning doctorates in math during the 1986-87 school year: a total of 362.

Connors, who did the survey for two national math societies, notes that while the number of math doctorates awarded by American universities has been dropping steadily for 15 years, last June was the first time that fewer than half went to U.S. citizens.

Connors blames much of the decline on the longstanding shortage of qualified math teachers at the elementary and secondary levels—which precludes many American students from ever getting interested in the field.

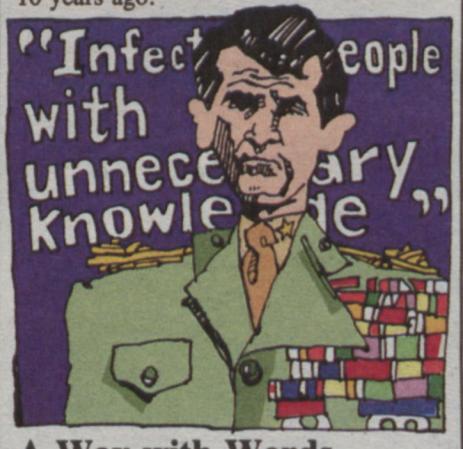
Unfortunately, Connors says, "there is no penalty for laying off a math teacher, even though school superintendents ought to be fined as severely for that as for killing a bald eagle."

Once and Still... College-Bound

College enrollment has remained at an all-time high even as the population of 18-to-24-year-olds declined, the Education Department reported in January.

Reasons? Increased numbers of older and part-time students—and more women, Asians, Hispanics, and foreign students.

Women account for 51 percent of the total U.S. population, but 53 percent of college enrollments—up from 49 percent 10 years ago.



A Way with Words

Those ever-vigilant word hounds who hand out "doublespeak" awards each year on behalf of the National Council of Teachers of English are at it again.

And Lt. Col. Oliver North's tour de force performance during the Iran-contra hearings apparently overwhelmed the doublespeak folks with choice phrases.

Among them: Col. North's statement that he was careful not to "infect other people with unnecessary knowledge" and his suggestion that the congressional committee was "out to criminalize policy differences between co-equal branches of government."

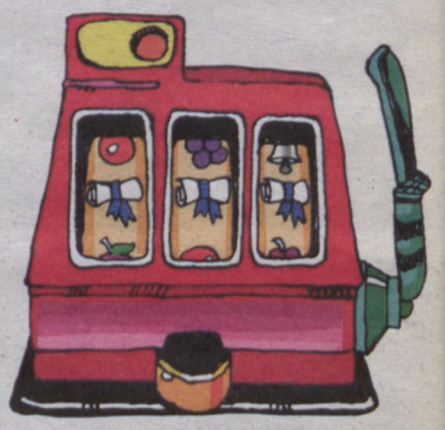
The judges also socked awards to—among many other doublespeakers—a savings bank that described itself as having a "substantial negative net worth" (it was facing bankruptcy) and a company that coined the phrase "negative advancement" for employee demotions.

Me First? Maybe Not

Twenty years ago, 83 percent of college frosh said "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" was either an "essential" or a "very important" life goal. Now only 40 percent say so.

What at least 76 percent of the 210,000 first-year college students surveyed last fall by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute say they really want out of life is to get rich.

Still, some college presidents who are part of a new project designed to promote public service as part of undergraduate education say the "me" generation is no more. They cite a 15 percent increase in the number of students earning advanced degrees in social work to support their contention that not all college kids are motivated by greed.



Against All Odds

Remember the time you pulled the lever on a one-armed bandit in a Las Vegas casino and instead of triple oranges, the machine left you with a couple of pears and a peach? Well, take heart.

You may have unknowingly helped a kid through college.

In 1981, Golden Nugget Inc., a large Las Vegas casino-hotel owner, pumped some $2 million of the house take into a fund that's generating $350,000 a year. And that money has annually funded scholarships for 50 Nevada kids. The grants range from $500 to $8,000 and are renewed each year if the student maintains a B average. □

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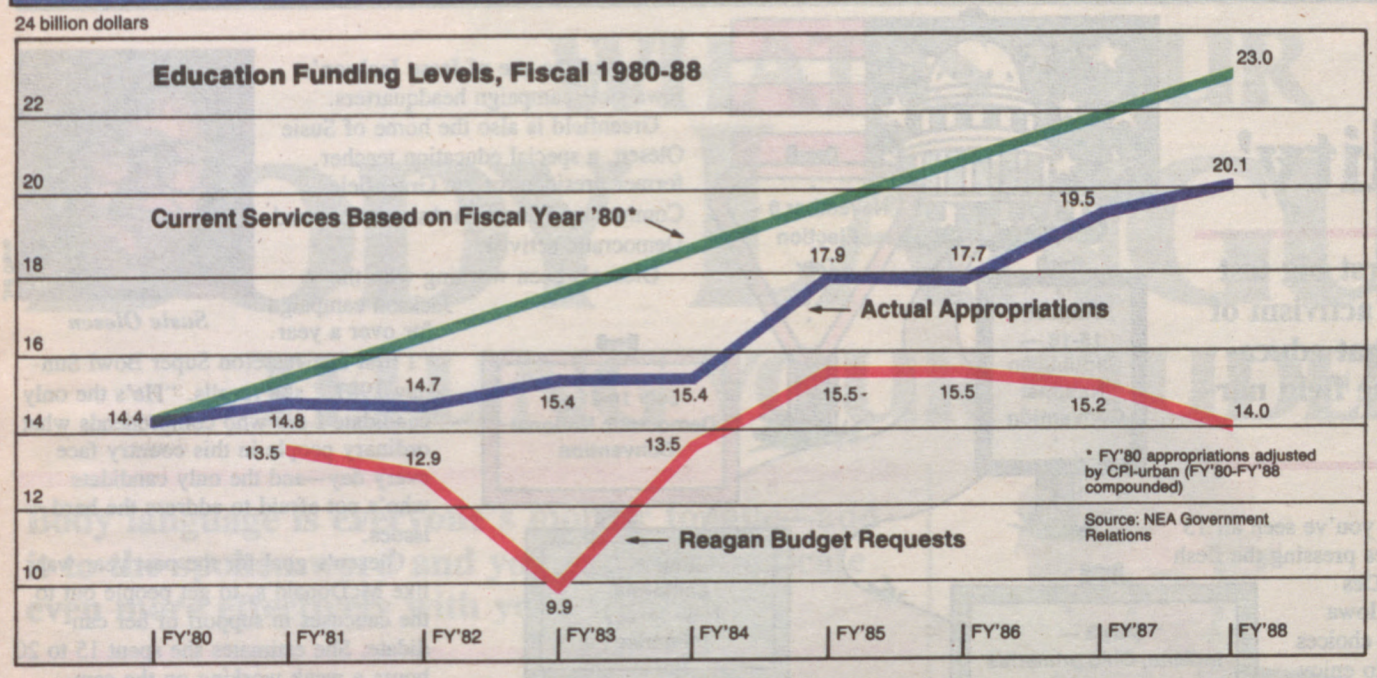


ABOUT FACE?

Finally, in its last year, the Reagan Administration has stopped proposing deep cuts in aid to education. But the federal government still isn't delivering the same help as in pre-Reagan days.

The Reagan Administration has decided, in its last year in office, *not* to call for deep cuts in federal aid to education. But that policy shift isn't likely to translate into significant new help for your school district.

The Administration would have had to propose $25 billion for already existing programs just to provide schools and students with the same level of help they received back under the 1981 budget, the last one voted before the Reagan Administration took office.

In 1981, federal aid accounted for 9.2 percent of all expenditures for public elementary and secondary education. Now, in 1988, federal help accounts for just 6.0 percent.

This backsliding translates into noticeable differences at the school building level. The biggest federal aid-to-education program, Chapter 1, which targets dollars to schools serving disadvantaged students, now serves less than 6 million of the nearly 15 million children eligible for assistance.

The story is the same with federal aid for educating the handicapped. In 1981 federal aid covered 12 percent of the costs of educating handicapped students. Last year, it covered only 7 percent.

Federal aid doesn't just help the disadvantaged and the handicapped, of course. NEA members have come to count on federal support for a variety of innovative projects.

Vermont science teacher Paul Garrett and the three other members of the fifth grade teaching team at Founders Memorial School in Essex used $1,000 of federal Chapter 2 money last year to initiate a Weather Watch project.

Explains Garrett: "We bought weather-monitoring equipment and computer software that lets the kids combine weather observations with historic weather data to make forecasts for the region."

Connie Ottman, a marketing educator at Mid-Florida Tech in Orlando, is using sex equity funds from the federal vocational education act to prepare female students for jobs selling auto parts.

Mark Sasahara

Equipment bought with federal aid helps Vermont teacher Paul Garrett and fifth graders monitor weather.

"When a customer orders a part from an automotive sales department, we now have a computer program—bought with sex equity funds—that can suggest to a sales trainee related parts the customer might also need," says Ottman. "Men are likely to know which auto parts are usually replaced together because they grow up learning about cars, but women have been handicapped in this field because they typically aren't taught such things."

The budget for the federal Chapter 2 program, which made such a difference to Vermont's Garrett and his students, is down 3.9 percent this year. In fact, the entire 1988 Chapter 2 appropriation of $508 million is down almost $300 million from the $803 million appropriated for Chapter 2-like programs in 1981.

And the vocational aid that Florida's Connie Ottman depends upon would have disappeared entirely if Congress had last year accepted the Reagan Administration's recommendation to wipe out federal aid to vocational education. Congress, fortunately, listened to NEA members and other friends of voc ed and refused to go along.

Five years after *A Nation at Risk*— the *federal* report that charged America with committing unilateral educational disarmament—the federal government still isn't meeting its responsibility to help improve education.

That reality, most observers feel, won't change significantly until there's a new administration in the White House—and a new commitment to make education a top priority federal investment.

—Nancy R. Needham

The State of the States

When 44 of the 50 state legislatures convene this year, education—the biggest single item in most state budgets—will command attention everywhere. A record 21 states will put education at the top of their fiscal priorities, according to legislators polled this winter by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Last year NCSL found the legislatures preoccupied with balancing state budgets and responding to federal tax reform.

Southern legislatures—Alabama, Arkansas (whose legislature does not convene but is studying issues in 1988), Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—seem to give education issues higher priority than legislatures elsewhere, NCSL reports. Louisiana and West Virginia, both threatened with budget deficits, have scheduled special sessions that could profoundly affect the course of education in those states.

Other NCSL predictions: Five states—Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Tennessee—will give teacher salary increases high fiscal priority; others, including Georgia, will find it difficult to fund previously legislated reforms.

—N.R.N.

News Beat

● To meet the needs of the nation's 20 million **noncollege-bound** young people, the federal government should increase aid to education and job training by at least $50 billion over the next decade, says a new report from the William T. Grant Foundation. The study, *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America*, asserts that the majority of non-college-bound youths are as able as their collegiate counterparts and cites the desperate need for programs to ensure that these youngsters get stable, well-paying jobs.

● The number of **children with AIDS** rose at least 60 percent in 1987, according to a new report from the House of Representatives' Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. The panel calls the federal response to AIDS "underfunded, uncoordinated, and insufficient." To date, AIDS has been diagnosed in 691 children under the age of 13, and the Public Health Service predicts another 2,300 cases by 1991. Most child AIDS victims contract the disease from their mothers before birth or from contaminated blood products.

● The Boy Scouts of America has established an **American Labor merit badge**. To earn the new badge, Scouts must—among other things—study labor history, keep track of current issues of concern to American workers, gain an understanding of the goals of organized labor, and attend a union meeting or visit a union office.

● Two years after the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress **(NAEP)** tests showed dramatic drops in reading ability among 9- and 17-year-olds, officials are still not sure why students did so poorly. Among early hypotheses, now discounted: some tests were taken the day the Challenger exploded; many test booklets were printed in blue ink; too little time was allotted for each question; the student sample was skewed. A more likely explanation: flawed test questions. □

WELL PUT!

Joe Di Dio

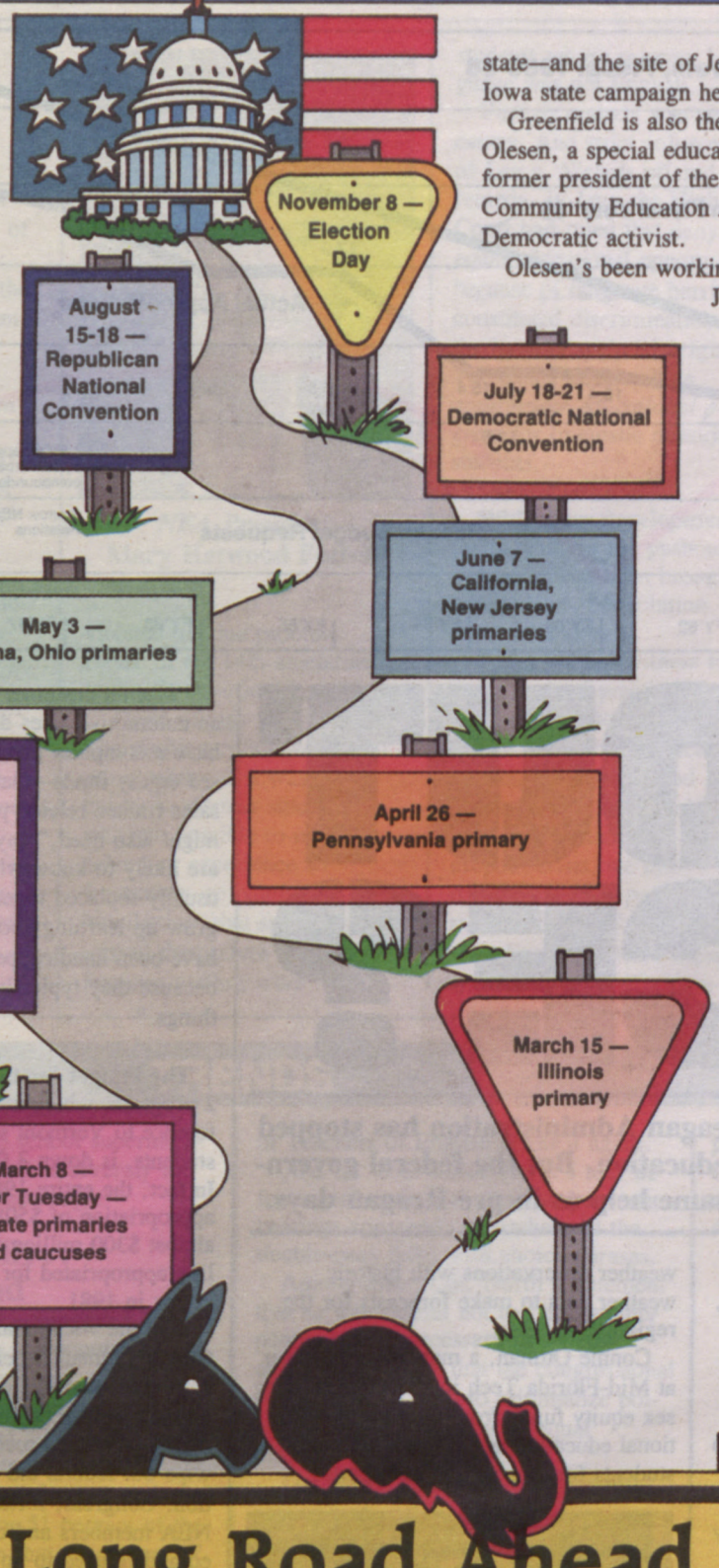
"If we are serious about improving the quality of public education, we will have to make more than marginal changes in the attractiveness of teaching. We will need to consciously and explicitly value teachers and the act of responsible, responsive teaching."

—Linda Darling-Hammond, director of education and human resources, RAND Corporation, Washington, D.C.

CAMPAIGN '88

'A Special Responsibility'

Iowa's caucuses marked the first big test for Presidential hopefuls. The activism of Iowa NEA members ensures that education's voice will be heard as the field narrows in the months ahead.


November 8 — Election Day
August 15-18 — Republican National Convention
July 18-21 — Democratic National Convention
June 7 — California, New Jersey primaries
May 3 — Indiana, Ohio primaries
April 26 — Pennsylvania primary
April 19 — New York primary
March 15 — Illinois primary
March 8 — Super Tuesday — 20 state primaries and caucuses

If you watch any television news at all, you've seen all 13 of the announced Presidential candidates pressing the flesh in places like Dubuque and Waterloo, Des Moines and Cedar Rapids. On February 8, Iowa Democrats and Republicans registered their choices at local party caucuses. Iowans have come to enjoy their state's pivotal role in Presidential politics.

"We have a special responsibility to our colleagues across the country," says Angie King, a third grade teacher at Des Moines' King-Perkins Elementary School. "The candidates spend a lot of time in Iowa. We have the opportunity to meet with them in small groups, to really discuss issues and have some influence.

ISEA

Angie King

"We owe it to our colleagues in other states to use this opportunity to focus on education," adds King, who chairs the Iowa State Education Association's Political Action Committee.

"We urge ISEA members to set up meetings with the candidates," King continues. "Some teachers' homes almost become way stations for candidates—they're constantly hosting coffees and small group discussions."

For Phil McDonald, a social studies teacher at Valley High School and past president of the West Des Moines Education Association, intense interest in politics goes back 20 years.

"Politics affects us, both as teachers and as citizens," says McDonald. "It's important to be involved—and I frankly love it. I've been an active Republican since 1980. Before that I was a Democratic activist."

McDonald, who's been a delegate to state political conventions since 1972, is a precinct committee member and the youth chair of the Polk County Republican Party. Last summer he worked to organize local coalitions of farmers, senior citizens, veterans, and handicapped persons.

Jeff Davis

Phil McDonald

"The purpose of all pre-caucus work is to get people to the caucuses to support your candidate," explains McDonald. "It's the initial political spadework, the nuts and bolts of our political process."

Greenfield, Iowa, lies 55 miles southwest of Des Moines. It's a farm community of 2,200 people, the Adair County seat, part of the most rural congressional district in a very rural state—and the site of Jesse Jackson's Iowa state campaign headquarters.

Greenfield is also the home of Susie Olesen, a special education teacher, former president of the Greenfield Community Education Association, and Democratic activist.

Olesen's been working with the Jackson campaign for over a year.

Jeff Davis

Susie Olesen

"I first met Jesse on Super Bowl Sunday 1987," she recalls. "He's the only candidate I see who comprehends what ordinary people in this country face every day—and the only candidate who's not afraid to address the hard issues."

Olesen's goal for the past year was, like McDonald's, to get people out to the caucuses in support of her candidate. She estimates she spent 15 to 20 hours a week working on the campaign—answering mail, representing Jackson at meetings, conducting caucus training—educating people about the political process.

"One day at school, a student asked if it was OK to ask people who they were going to vote for," Olesen recalls. "It started a discussion about the caucus process, how at the caucuses you have to stand up for who and what you believe in—and how respecting others' opinions is important in a democracy."

Iowa's February precinct caucuses are the first step—followed by county, district, and state conventions—in the process of choosing state delegates to this summer's national political conventions. The state party platforms also get their start in the precinct caucuses.

"The media stay focused on the Presidential candidates," explains ISEA PAC Chair King, "but we're equally concerned with the parties' platforms." To help teachers pass ISEA-supported resolutions—as well as get teachers elected as delegates—the Association conducts caucus training throughout the state. The training explains the caucus process and how ISEA members can be effective participants.

"Teachers can have a large say in the political process," explains King. "Our organizational and public speaking skills serve us well in the political arena. And the more ISEA members who are elected as delegates, the more impact we have."

At the Republican and Democratic county conventions, to be held this month, the ISEA Educators Caucuses give teachers and others who support education issues the opportunity to work together to plan strategy.

"Our aim is to increase education's clout," concludes King, "in Iowa and nationally. We need a President who understands the importance of education as the foundation of our economic development, the foundation of everything we want our nation to be. For that to happen, educators have to be involved at every step along the political road."

—Heidi Steffens

The Long Road Ahead

The long road to the White House began in Iowa and wended its way to New Hampshire a week later. Now it's headed for "Super Tuesday," March 8, the day of 20 state Presidential primaries and caucuses.

All along the road this spring, NEA members will be seeking to select the delegates and define the issues that will shape our nation's agenda for the next four years.

NEA's political action committee voted last December to withhold endorsement of a Presidential candidate until later in 1988—but noted that the six Democrats who completed the Association's endorsement process are "acceptable." Some state Associations are supporting one or more of these candidates.

While none of the Republican candidates has so far chosen to complete NEA-PAC's endorsement process, the invitation to do so still stands.

NEA members across the country are hard at work during these primary months when the Association can have the greatest political impact.

► New Hampshire NEA members went all out to support their colleagues running for delegate. Result: almost 20 percent of the delegates chosen to run on candidate slates were NEA members.

Portsmouth teacher Barbara Hopley is slated to attend the Democratic National Convention as a Dukakis delegate. "Our job," she says, "will be to make sure the Democratic platform addresses education issues."

► The Mississippi Association of Educators has endorsed Gore and Jackson. MAE is using phone banks to contact every member and urge support for educators running as delegates in the March 8 primary.

Jackson, Miss., teacher Lorna Thomas, a phone bank coordinator who's running as a Jackson delegate, explains, "We want to be sure our members are aware that our participation is needed to keep education in the forefront of this campaign."

► In another Super Tuesday primary state, the Georgia Association of Educators has endorsed Gore, Dukakis, Simon, and Jackson. "They all have strong positions on education," reports Pat Colson, a teacher in Valdosta who's running as a Gore delegate. "It's vital that we participate in the early days when education's voice can really be heard. That's the only way to be sure we'll have a voice at the national conventions."

—H.S.

IN THE CLASSROOM

WHAT IS YOUR BODY LANGUAGE TELLING YOUR STUDENTS?

Body language is everyone's mother tongue—add it to the spoken word and you can communicate even more effectively with your students.

Ever since people first began trying to figure each other out, body language has been the object of study, scientific or otherwise. In recent years, much has been published about what students' movements and expressions are saying when their mouths are shut—especially about how students from different cultural backgrounds express the same feelings.

But what are *your* gestures and expressions telling students? Do they support or undermine the message of your words? The answer is important, because when words and body language disagree, the words generally lose.

Some 82 percent of teachers' communication is nonverbal, says Patrick Miller of the University of Missouri in Columbia. Miller, author of the recently revised *Nonverbal Communication*,* notes that certain kinds of body language are common to most teachers. Smiles, winks, scowls, the "evil eye," an encouraging pat on the shoulder, or a call-to-order tap on the head—all are standard classroom media of exchange.

"A smile is a visual hug," says sixth grade teacher Shirley Post of Moscow, Idaho. "And in these economic times, when parents may be busy and preoccupied, everyone is hungry for hugs."

Post, who gives workshops on teachers' nonverbal communication for the Idaho Education Association, notes that if you add a wink to your smile, "that makes a special little moment together."

Post's nonverbal vocabulary list:

► A roll of the eyes with a grin and a shake of the head—"You're so delightful, but what you're doing is really crazy. Let's think about this again."

► A firm touch and a smile—"Let's look at what you're doing here."

► A firm touch and no smile—"This is serious."

When you sit a student down for a serious talk, Post suggests, arrange to be a little lower so you don't dominate too much. If a student's arms are crossed, showing defensiveness or defiance, or if the fingers are working nervously, ask, "May I have your hand?" and hold that hand firmly and warmly. The message: "We're here because I really care about you and don't want you to be afraid."

At the beginning of each year, Post tells her class she's a very touching sort of teacher, so anyone who doesn't like being touched (she's thinking mainly of abused children here) can just let her know. So far, says Post, no child has taken that option.

What works with elementary students may be a big mistake in high school. Paul Morris of Lake Worth Senior High School, near Palm Beach, Fla., has taught fourth grade, junior high, and high school math. He's found that "high school students just want to get the material and get out. If someone in middle school does something right, you can start clowning around and fall on your knees, but in high school they'd think you were crazy. In elementary school you can use the way you stand and face them to let them know you're not happy with them. Or you can stare at them until they pay attention—but in high school they'll look back at you worse."

Morris does offer one piece of advice for teachers at any level: "Don't sit behind the desk. Stand at a podium or walk around the room."

In fact, researchers say, effective teachers use more motions than others when they're interacting with students, directing their attention to key points, or demonstrating concepts. This improves students' attitudes—and in high school, it improves their test scores as well.

Students say they consider teachers who move towards them more warm and friendly than others. They've probably noticed, without realizing it, that all of us tend to turn towards those we like, just as we look longer and more often at people we trust, respect, or care about.

In fact, use of space—including room arrangement—is a crucial form of body language. Most teachers know that students in the front and middle rows respond more often than those in back rows—even when seating is assigned. Low-performing students actually improve when they're seated in front.

But the space question is more complicated than that, says the University of Missouri's Miller. Because of teachers' authority in the classroom, they have "freedom of space"—they can determine how close to come to students. They can also normally limit how close someone comes to them by using eye contact, gestures, or facial expressions.

Distance and closeness themselves have meaning. Different students have different needs for private space, and that need varies with the situation. When a teacher won't let a student come near, that student understands what researchers have found: people typically stand farther away from people with handicaps, people of a different race, and authority figures. Elementary students from cultures where personal space is very small even do better on exams when a teacher sits close to them.

At the same time, an aggressive or unwelcome approach arouses anxiety and hostility. Maintaining the right distance is a delicate matter—it's necessary to avoid either invading the space a student needs in order to feel secure or establishing a distance that feels cold.

Touching also requires careful judgment. Normally, people in superior positions touch those in lower positions, so grabbing an unruly student by the shoulder may be an invasion of space that causes resentment. Miller recommends the use of touching mainly as encouragement—young children, especially, learn more when teachers come close, touch them, smile at them.

Looking students in the eye, leaning forward, smiling, and nodding all make a positive impression on students—and all, says the University of Missouri's Miller, are more commonly used towards students the teacher considers bright. Since students correctly associate these actions with approval, the pattern often sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teacher eye contact, for example, has been shown to increase the amount of information students retain, intensify their attention, raise their participation in class, and improve their attitudes.

In fact, Miller and other researchers have been able to list types of body language that are common among effective teachers. These people are likely to show enthusiasm, vary their expressions, gesture for emphasis, move toward students, spend more time right in front of the class than behind a desk or at the chalkboard, look students in the eye, nod their heads, and show a sense of humor. They also correlate all their nonverbal communications with their words.

Body language, like any other language, can be learned, practiced, and used. All of us, whether we want to or not, speak body language, but school people who are fluent in it can speak volumes without uttering a sound.

—Jane Power

Rick Brady

When Body Language Replaces Speech

For teachers of the hearing-impaired, fluency in body language is more than a tool—it's a necessity. Melissa Herring of the Everhart School in Tallahassee, Fla., teaches students aged 8 to 21 who are classified as both less than educable mentally handicapped and either hearing-impaired or simply nonverbal. She uses a system called Total Communication, which is common for hearing-impaired students.

"Because we use signing, there aren't any inflections to listen for," Herring points out. "That means I use facial expressions, gestures—anything to get the point across. Suppose I want to teach a student the sign for *where*. I'd sign *where*, I'd form my mouth to say *where*, but I'd also be looking around with a blank expression, as if I were searching for something."

It's a demanding job, but not too different from what other teachers do. "After all," Herring points out, "raising your hand is nonverbal communication. Everyone speaks body language, and in the classroom, it works." *—J.P.*

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Local Look

CALIFORNIA

The Oakland Education Association is making class size a major community issue.

OEA is actively promoting the California Teachers Association's "Don't Crowd My Kids" campaign, aimed at bringing the state's crowded classrooms to the forefront of public attention and getting an initiative to reduce class size on the November ballot.

"Class size *must* be reduced if we're going to achieve excellence in our schools," explains OEA President Denise Saddler-Lipscomb.

OEA has enlisted the support of Oakland's mayor, city council, and school board in support of the campaign. The mayor and school board designated Feb. 15 as "Don't Crowd Us Kids" day in Oakland. On that day, the winners of OEA's "Don't Crowd Us Kids" student poster contest were announced, and OEA members circulated petitions in the community to place the CTA initiative on the ballot.

"We'll be collecting petition signatures until April," says Oakland teacher Cheryl R. Washington, chair of the campaign. "And we've got a prize for the teacher who collects the most signatures—School Superintendent Joe Coto will take their class for half a day.

"We've gotten a lot of community support," concludes Washington, "because this campaign speaks to everyone who cares about our children."

LOUISIANA

In January, when Terrebonne Parish voters rejected a sales tax and *ad valorem* property tax to support education, the defeat made teachers sick. So sick, in fact, that out of about 1,000 teachers, 750 couldn't even come to school next day. Their disease must have been highly contagious: by the second day more than 850 were out, and the support personnel said they felt something coming on too.

That evening, the school board was forced to apply a very effective cure: it unanimously accepted four of five demands presented by the Terrebonne Association of Educators (TAE), holding the fifth for discussion. The demands concern equitable salaries, both for regular work and for extracurricular activities; an independent audit (public skepticism about the need for money played a part in defeating the tax referendum); and, most basic, a regular process through which school board and school employees will discuss policies and contracts.

What does the Association hope to gain? "Fair compensation for all employees," says TAE President Chris Wells, "and proper funding of education programs through public support. And we want to see the community involved in its education system."

COLORADO

The Jefferson County Education Association has nailed down "historic" reductions in class size, reports JCEA president Paul Schmidt.

In early 1988 negotiations on contract reopeners, the school district formally agreed to contractual limits on class size. The new language also "essentially admits that class size is important for student development in all grades," Schmidt notes.

In grades K-2, average class size in each grade in each school will drop to 24 pupils by this fall. Teachers with from three six pupils above that limit will receive additional aide time. At seven pupils over the limit, the district must make some mutually agreeable adjustment, such as setting up a teaching team.

In grades 3-6, the new class limit will be 28 students; for grades 7-12, maximum teacher load will be 150 students a day. A Class Size Relief Committee will have funds available—more than $1.6 million for grades 3-6 and $658,000 for the secondary grades—to hire the additional staff necessary to provide relief for classes over those limits. Before K-2 relief was made part of the regular budget, K-2 teachers—whose classes had top priority—had used up much of the Relief Committee's funds.

The contract also stipulates that in determining relief, greater weight must be given to students with special needs.

DIAL-A-TEACHER PROJECT PAYS OFF IN ST. LOUIS

Help's Just a Phone Call Away

The phones don't stop ringing—from the time the hotline staff begin until they close shop for the night. And these dedicated NEA St. Louis members are delighted to provide a community service.

Another homework hotline? So what's the big deal? The big deal is that in St. Louis, Mo., Association members, business leaders, and the media have teamed up to offer a much-needed service with the potential to reach some 600,000 students and their families.

Domino's Pizza provided $50,000 to foot the cost of 25 teachers' time and to pay the phone bills for the hotline's three WATS lines. KMOV-TV (Channel 4 in St. Louis) promotes the hotline, marketing it with 10- and 30-second spots. Channel 4 also produced several news features on the project and designed its logo.

Monday through Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m., six NEA St. Louis members staff the phones from hotline project headquarters at Fontbonne College of Education. The hotline began last September and is set to run through the end of April. The service reaches students in metropolitan St. Louis as well as in three neighboring Missouri and two Illinois counties.

Such corporations as Southwestern Bell, MCI, Contel, and McDonnell Douglas are offering various kinds of support to the hotline, as is the St. Louis County Special School District. Retired teacher Nelson Wolf directs the entire project.

"The results have been fantastic," reports hotline team member Dorothy Ballard, a media reading teacher at Shaw Elementary School's Visual and Performing Arts Center. "We average about 750 calls a week. We talk with so many children—shy children, for example, who might never ask questions in class. Most of the students are genuinely interested, but we do get students who think they can waste time in school and depend on the hotline staff to do their work."

Those answering the hotline have learned to easily recognize—and deal with—the goldbricks.

"Of course, we help these students," Ballard says, "but not the way they expect. We work them through their problems. They find they'd be better off paying attention in class!"

"One child called who seemed to understand her homework," recalls Edith Phillips, who teaches special education at Webster Middle School. "I soon realized that she was home alone and just needed someone to talk to."

Often the students on the other end of the hotline turn out to have no basic references—not even a dictionary—in their homes. Besides helping them with their immediate problems, the hotline staff also recommend that they become familiar with public library resources.

It's not just the kids who benefit from the hotline, Phillips notes. She also gets calls from adults trying to earn high school equivalency certificates.

Parents often listen in while a staff member is talking with their son or daughter. "They want to know how they can help their children learn," explains Phillips. □

PENNSYLVANIA

The Cheltenham school district is in the final stages of a $3 million asbestos cleanup project—but it took years of hard work by the Cheltenham Educators Association to make it happen.

As far back as 1983, CEA leaders were skeptical about whether their schools were safe from cancer-causing asbestos. So they hired their own consultant to look into the district's records.

The consultant confirmed their suspicions: although district officials reported the schools as safe, many buildings were loaded with hazardous asbestos. CEA threatened to go public and file suit—and at last persuaded the district to fund the multimillion dollar inspection and cleanup effort that's now nearly complete.

"We're generally pleased with the results," reports CEA President Ron Carroll-Ranieri. "The district finally decided to get this problem out of the way once and for all."

GEORGIA

Members of the Atlanta Association of Educators marched by candlelight in early February to urge school board support for better salaries and school conditions.

"We want them to know we are concerned as they work through the budget process," explains AAE President Audrey Butts. Lower class size, duty-free lunch periods, planning time, and air-conditioning in school buildings are a few of AAE's demands, along with a supplement to raise the governor's proposed 3 percent teacher pay increase to 12 percent.

NEBRASKA

Nebraska teachers and their communities seem to stay up nights thinking of ways to reward each other. In Omaha, investor Warren Buffett offers no-strings $10,000 grants to city teachers, and the Omaha Education Association offers scholarships to students.

Now, in western Nebraska, the 77-member Ogallala Education Association has announced to parents of this year's kindergarten class that their kids are eligible for two Class of 2000 scholarships—worth $1,000 each—that OEA will award members of that class when they graduate from high school.

On top of that, reports OEA President Mary Cumming, "we've also begun an annual G.I.F.T. (Graduate Incentive From Teachers) scholarship program for graduates of our high school who go directly on to any accredited vocational or academic school. We'll make out $50 checks jointly to the kids and their new schools every August."

Ogallala, pop. 5,000, is an agricultural community. "The economy is still depressed here," Cumming notes, "but despite that, the public is enthusiastic about contributing to our scholarship funds." □

State Side

PACIFIC

Montana Education Association President Eric Feaver hailed it as "a great day for public education." The occasion was a court decision on state funding of schools.

Some 60 Montana districts were plaintiffs in the historic case, which charged the state with inequitable funding of the public schools. As a result, the plaintiffs argued, poorer school districts cannot provide the same educational opportunities as wealthier districts.

Independently intervening in the case, MEA argued that the state underfunding places an unfair tax burden on local districts.

The Montana district court judge sided entirely with the plaintiffs and MEA. He ruled that the state "has failed to shoulder its burden of funding" and of providing equality of educational opportunity.

The court ordered the Montana legislature to come up with an equitable system of school finance by Oct. 1, 1989.

SOUTHEAST

The Alabama Education Association's 13,000 education support members have secured full electoral rights in the Association beginning June 1. AEA's Delegate Assembly this winter passed overwhelmingly a resolution giving the members of the Education Support Personnel Organization (ESPO) the right to run—and vote—for Association office.

At the same time, ESPO—like AEA's Postsecondary Division—will keep its own identity. ESPO locals will remain in business alongside their teacher counterparts, and ESPO will continue to hold an annual Assembly and elect officers of its own.

"The decision makes ESPO members feel more professional," says ESPO president Becky Lee. "We expect they'll participate more in the whole organization than they have in the past."

NORTHEAST

"Help Your Children Learn—Talk to a Teacher." That advice will be going out on the airwaves all over New Jersey this spring, as part of a $180,000 advertising campaign (primarily print and radio) by the New Jersey Education Association.

The campaign, which began last fall, not only encourages ongoing teacher-parent communication, but also offers brief tips to parents—such as providing a quiet place and time for kids to study and setting aside 15 minutes a day to read to each child.

The home-school cooperation message "is not new," NJEA President Dennis Giordano notes, "but it bears repeating."

NJEA's effort coincides with a similar campaign by the state department of education.

MID-ATLANTIC

Because of the Virginia Education Association's slogan, "We teach the children," you might get the impression that VEA represents only teachers. But some 3,000 VEA members are educational support personnel.

"Our organizing among school support staff takes basically a one-on-one approach," notes VEA negotiations and organizing director Susanne Kelly. "That's because the state outlaws collective bargaining, so it's not possible to recruit whole bargaining units as other state Associations are able to do."

VEA laid the groundwork for ESP recruitment five years ago when delegates extended full rights to ESP and created an at-large ESP seat on the VEA board of directors. A 20-member standing committee helps advise the Association on ESP issues and concerns.

MIDWEST

The Illinois Education Association and the state board of education are leading a coalition of education groups to mount grassroots support for increased funding.

Last spring Gov. James Thompson was forced to cut education funding by $200 million after the legislature refused to raise taxes. Some $22 million was later restored.

"Much is riding on a state tax increase for education," says IEA President Lee Betterman. "Proper employee compensation depends on full state funding. So do reform programs, our pension systems, and most of all, quality education for all of Illinois' young people." □

WEST

NEA-New Mexico members are dealing with the aftermath of the legislature's insincere attempt two years ago to enact education reform.

"We opposed the reform bill then," explains NEA-New Mexico president Ima Lee Wells, "because given fiscal realities, we knew there wouldn't be enough money to pay for the expensive parts, such as ambitious reductions in class size—no matter how desirable those reforms might be.

"We were right," Wells concludes. "The legislature is now backing down, amending the law so that extensive class size reductions aren't required. But those 'reforms' that didn't cost money are still in effect and making a difference—mostly a negative one."

For instance, the legislature's requirement that more than 10 unexcused absences in a year mean automatic course failure for high school students is one of the reasons the dropout rate has risen in the last year, Wells contends.

The same 'reform'-minded 1986 legislature also abolished teacher tenure, exposing the state's 15,000 classroom teachers to arbitrary dismissal. □

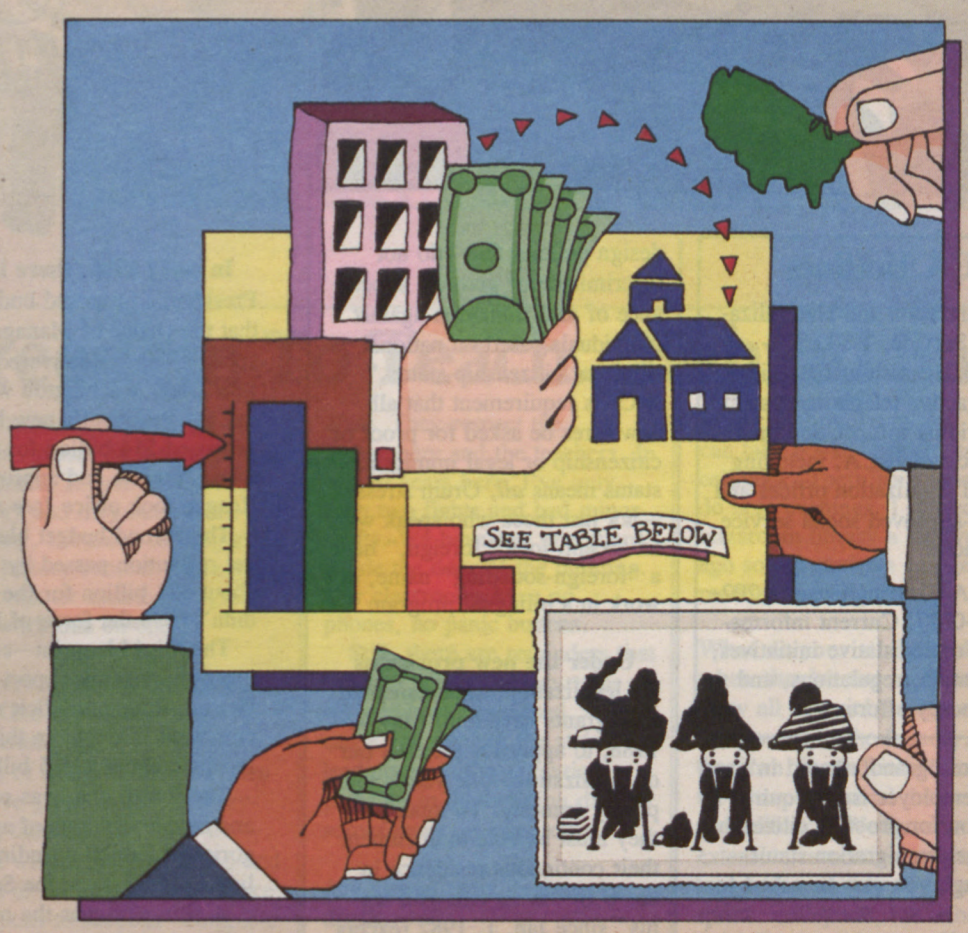
GROSS WEALTH PER SCHOOL-AGE CHILD

Where Does *Your* State Rank?

The five groupings below show how the states rank on theoretical capacity to support public education, based on their gross state product (the gross market value of the goods and services attributable to labor and property located in a state).

For each state, gross product has been divided by the number of 5- to 17-year-olds in the population. Half of the nation's public school students reside in the 19 states that have a gross product per child of $83,790 or more (at or above the level of Arizona).

These dollar figures, of course, don't reflect the degree of tax effort or many other important variables. But knowing where your state currently falls on this measure of available wealth can often be helpful in lobbying for better funding of public schools. □



High		Moderately High		Moderate		Moderately Low		Low	
State	Gross State Product per School-Age Child	State	Gross State Product per School-Age Child	State	Gross State Product per School-Age Child	State	Gross State Product per School-Age Child	State	Gross State Product per School-Age Child
Alaska	$173,445	Hawaii	$96,358	Washington	$82,697	Wisconsin	$74,897	South Carolina	$63,460
Nevada	115,033	Delaware	95,018	Georgia	82,522	Michigan	74,859	Montana	61,579
Connecticut	113,955	Maryland	93,862	Rhode Island	82,329	Oregon	73,568	Alabama	61,192
Wyoming	111,856	Virginia	91,922	Kansas	81,225	Tennessee	72,965	Arkansas	59,057
New York	111,856	Florida	91,909	Pennsylvania	81,023	Indiana	71,231	West Virginia	57,894
Massachusetts	109,580	Illinois	89,639	North Carolina	79,175	New Mexico	68,987	South Dakota	56,352
California	106,041	Minnesota	86,031	Ohio	77,225	Vermont	68,780	Utah	52,948
New Jersey	103,564	New Hampshire	84,721	Louisiana	77,137	North Dakota	67,544	Idaho	52,829
Colorado	101,654	**Arizona**	**83,790**	Nebraska	76,943	Maine	66,760	Mississippi	50,230
Texas	99,300	Missouri	83,554	Oklahoma	75,178	Iowa	66,099		
						Kentucky	65,980		

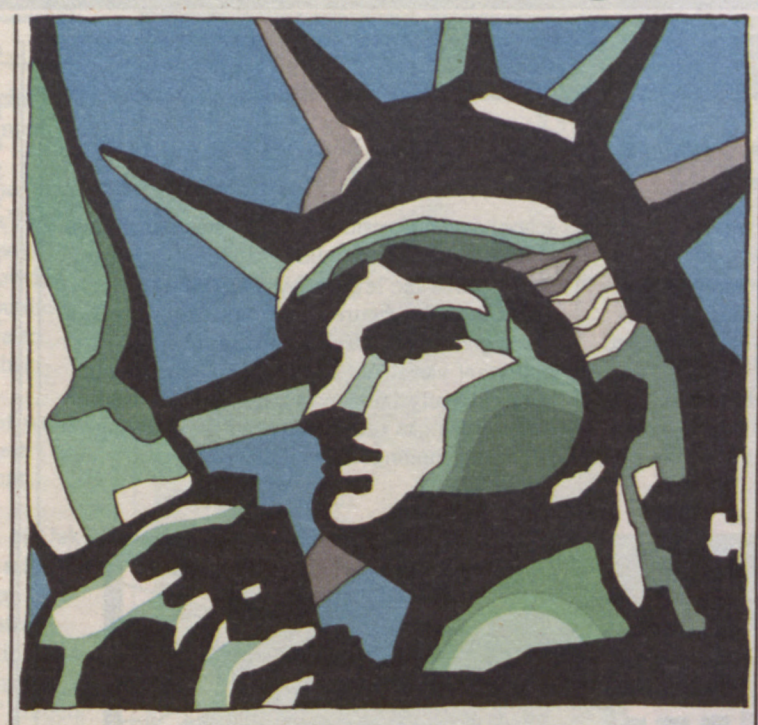
Sources: Council of Chief State School Officers, *State Education Indicators—1987*, and National Governors' Association, *Results in Education: 1987*. Based on U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Provisional Gross State Estimates" (Dept. of Commerce, 1986) and U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Dept. of Commerce, 1987).

HUMAN RIGHTS

Can You Prove You're 'Legal'?

When Congress enacted the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA, P.L. 99-603) in late 1986, it made sweeping changes in American immigration law.

Delegates to the 1987 NEA Representative Assembly, recognizing the impact the new law's employment and legalization provisions could have on members and students, put NEA on record as urging adequate state funding of education programs for new immigrants, public education about IRCA, and member participation in efforts to help undocumented immigrants legalize their status.



Under IRCA, which took effect Nov. 6, 1986, employers are prohibited from hiring workers who cannot document their U.S. citizenship or legal immigration status. The law sets a May 4, 1988, deadline for undocumented persons who have resided in the U.S. continuously since Jan. 1, 1982, to apply for legalization. This is a two-tier process in which an undocumented immigrant may apply first for one year's temporary amnesty and second for permanent residence.

Everyone—American-born or naturalized citizen or immigrant—hired since Nov. 6, 1986, has had to show proof of either U.S. citizenship or legal immigration status. Under IRCA, school districts and all other employers must attest that they have verified their new employees' employment eligibility, keep a record of all attempts to check their documents, and, for recent immigrants, establish a system to monitor their eligibility to work.

Employers who hire undocumented workers but fail to check their papers will be subject to fines starting this June.

If you were hired on or *before* Nov. 6, 1986, and have been continuously employed, you are "grandfathered in" and your employer isn't required to ask you for proof of citizenship or legal immigration status—although you *may* be asked for it.

But if you quit or are fired, you lose your "grandfather" status. And there is still a question about whether school employees who work only 9½ months a year are considered continuously employed under IRCA.

Lori Orum, director of the Innovative Education Project of the National Council of La Raza, advises school districts to design policies that "do not discriminate or give the appearance of discrimination against individuals based on national origin or citizenship status." IRCA's requirement that all new hires be asked for proof of citizenship or legal immigration status means *all*, Orum stresses—not just those who speak with an accent, look "foreign," have a "foreign-sounding" name, or work in a bilingual program.

Under the new provisions for legalization, undocumented immigrants have until May 4, 1988, to apply for the first tier of legalization—one year's temporary amnesty. To qualify, they must be able to document their continuous residence in the U.S. "in an unlawful status" since Jan. 1, 1982 (except for "brief, casual, and innocent absences") and must be generally admissible as immigrants.

The second tier of the legalization process (obtaining a permanent visa or "green card") requires applicants to demonstrate basic citizenship skills—that is, to have a minimal understanding of English and a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government, or to be pursuing a course of study to achieve these understandings.

Schools may help applicants qualify for legalization by providing copies of school and employment records that will document their continuous residence. They may also help legalized immigrants qualify for permanent status by operating or expanding adult education classes in English-as-a-Second Language and U.S. history and government. The federal government will provide $1 billion a year for four years to reimburse states for the education, legal assistance, and health care they provide to legalized immigrants.

—Mary Faber, NEA Human and Civil Rights

IRCA Hotlines

Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1-800-777-7700. Spanish and English interactive telephone system providing information on all aspects of IRCA, including local legalization offices and INS-approved social service agencies.

IRCA Clearinghouse, 1-202-544-0877. Current information on legislative initiatives, litigation, regulations, and advocacy efforts.

To Learn More About the New Law...

Immigration Reform Act—Employer Sanctions and Discrimination Prohibitions: A Guide for Workers, Employers, and their Advocates—available from the American Civil Liberties Union, 132 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. Single copies are free: enclose a stamped (39¢), self-addressed envelope. Bulk orders of 100 copies are $25, prepaid.

"The New Immigration Act: What Educators Ought To Know"—available for $1 from the National Council of La Raza, 20 F St., N.W., Washington, DC 20001.

Legal rights pamphlets about IRCA and naturalization—single copies available free from the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 99 Hudson St., New York, NY 10013.

The Advisor—monthly newsletter ($35 a year for nonprofit organizations; $45 for others) available from IRCA Clearinghouse, National Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Forum, 227 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. □

WASHINGTON WATCH

Getting a Piece of the Pie

There were times during the first session of the 100th Congress when you not only couldn't tell the players without a scorecard, you couldn't even tell what game was being played without an up-to-the-minute report from the officials.

NEA was involved in a host of actions completed in the first session—the defeat of Robert Bork as a Supreme Court nominee, House and Senate passage of legislation to reauthorize critical federal elementary and secondary education programs, House and Senate passage of catastrophic Medicare coverage, and others.

But the biggest game in town was the struggle over setting spending priorities for fiscal year 1988. And the battle over the budget was a perfect illustration of the old saw, "Those who like sausage and respect the law should not watch either one being made."

In early 1986, there had been much talk about the President's proposed budget being so "dead on arrival" that the Office of Management and Budget had the tax-and-spend blueprint delivered to Congress by ambulance. A year later, Washington wags sought in vain for a way to say the President's new budget was deader than dead. It proposed $14 billion for the Department of Education—less than Congress had appropriated for the department the year Reagan took office *(see related story on page 3)*.

The second budget blueprint for fiscal '88 was the budget resolution passed by Congress last June. It proposed about $21 billion for the Department of Education, but it didn't have the force of law.

The third blueprint—actually more of a threat than a promise—was the report on what would be provided if the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction law's across-the-board cuts went through. In this scenario, education would have received about $18.5 billion.

The fourth plan was really a collection of plans: House and Senate versions of appropriations bills for the 13 categories of federal spending. The House approved $20.6 billion for education; the Senate, $21.3 billion.

A fifth plan was the result of a four-week powwow between the White House and congressional leaders in October and November. This budget summit agreement called for $2.6 billion in cuts in the part of the budget that includes education.

On Dec. 23, the final plan was passed by both houses and signed by the President. This final FY88 appropriations level for education was $20.1 billion.

These revenue and spending levels were hashed out in an atmosphere of conflict and political sniping—not just between the legislative and executive branches of the government, but among liberal and conservative Democrats, moderate and conservative Republicans, House and Senate Democrats, and factions within the White House.

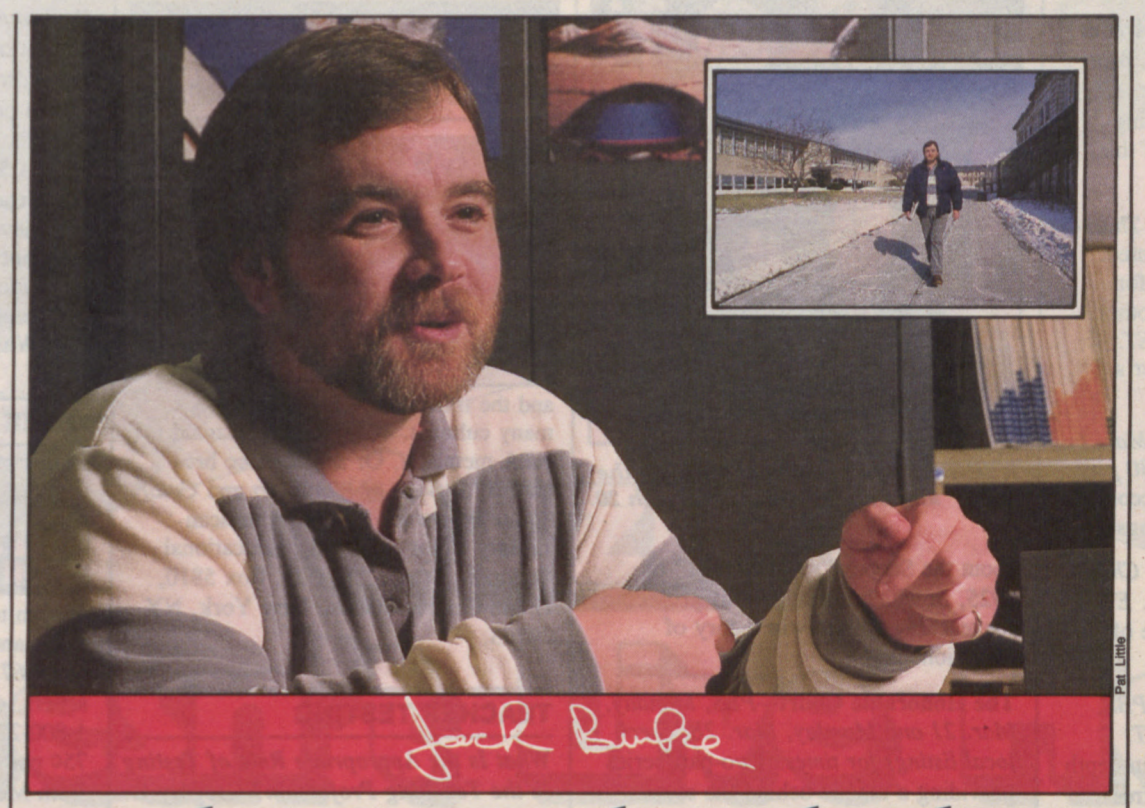
There was no lack of issues to fight about: Iran-contra, modifications in the Gramm-Rudman legislation, defense spending, and aid to the Nicaraguan contras. The handful of issues *not* disputed included (a) the idea that the one-day 500-point drop in stock market values was a signal of the need to reduce the federal deficit, and (b) the conviction that education should be treated as a priority. The difficult part was reconciling those two truths in the volatile hours toward the close of the session.

The result was a compromise. Increases in education programs—such as the $384 million boost for Chapter 1 compensatory programs for disadvantaged students—were not as large as originally planned, and the cuts—such as the $21 million reduction in Chapter 2 block grants—were not as severe as they might have been.

Overall it was a good year. Not a banner year. A good year. And in addition to the resources it provided to help in the national drive for excellence in education, the 100th Congress illustrated an important lesson for education advocates: take a position, hold it, and never blink.

—Michael Pons, NEA Government Relations

Meet:



Pat Little

Freedom To Teach...Behind Bars

It looks like any school building. But walk in, and you'll start to notice the differences. The halls are a little starker than most—green cement-block walls, grey metal doors. And the students all wear the same shade of brown. Some are 17 years old, but others are 65. And in this school, attendance is a factor in parole.

This is the educational building at Rockview Correctional Institute—a medium-security prison near State College, Pa. Some 2,000 men are crammed into a facility built to house 1,000.

Association member Jack Burke teaches here. One day this winter Marty Miller, assistant communications director for the Pennsylvania State Education Association, spent a few hours finding out what makes Burke—and his program—tick.

What's the most gratifying aspect of your job?
Taking some of the students from a third grade functional level up through GED and into further work. I remember one man, probably in his 40s, in my class. Working as a janitor in the barber school here, he decided to become a barber. But to get into that program, you have to show at least an eighth grade functional level, and he tested out at third grade. He came to us; we worked at it. After about two years of classes, he achieved the 10th grade level and was accepted into the barber program.

In time, he took the GED test and passed. He was more surprised than anybody. He completed the barber program, passed his state exam, and was offered a job as chief barber in another prison.

What gets inmates into your education program?
Before they're assigned to a prison, they spend three months in a diagnostic center. Those without high school diplomas are given a prescription for our program. Others are free to choose. For many inmates, class is a way to get some peace and quiet and to exercise their minds. It's a nonthreatening environment. In a facility that's 100 percent over capacity, 80 percent of the prisoners are two-to-a-cell. That makes for lots of noise and very little privacy.

What do you teach?
We offer everything from elementary through college level courses. We have about 650 students—roughly a third of the inmates. We contract with Penn State University for associate degree programs.

My students work on individualized programs I've matched to their interests and needs—mostly in language arts and math. If their interest is history and they need work in reading, I'll teach reading skills in a history context. I use a lot of computer-assisted programs. We work one on one.

Is there a student attitude you find especially tough to overcome?
A lot of students have the idea they're going to fail at everything they try. We have to work with these guys again and again to encourage them. Once they start to succeed—complete a course, get that GED—they get enthusiastic about learning.

The students under 21 are the toughest, because most of them have recently failed in school. A lot of them will spend three weeks in class, then I don't see them for six weeks. But they all come back and try again. Usually the motive is parole.

I spend more time with the first-timers. If I can get them through one course, teach them how to handle success, they come back for more.

Who makes the decisions about curriculum?
I have total curriculum freedom—that's one thing I really like about my job. I choose the material that will meet the needs and interests of my students—I'm not stuck with administrative choices. Within budgetary restraints, I can get anything I need to teach. To keep up, I belong to the Correctional Education Association—I read their journal and go to their conventions.

Do you have any discipline problems in your classrooms?
No. Our students want to be in class. They respect the atmosphere and the teachers. In my 10 years here, I've only seen two fights and had minor thefts. We have just one guard inside the door of the building. Our classrooms have no phones, no panic buttons.

Still, there are reminders that this is a prison. The curtains on my windows are closed, because you can see the stairs leading up to the execution chamber in the building directly across from my classroom.

Are any of your students on death row?
We don't have death row inmates here—they're kept at other institutions and brought here to be executed. The few who have been brought have had their executions stayed.

What happens when you're sick or on vacation?
Well, they don't bring in subs! We take vacations much as people in private employment do, and during those periods the program is down.

Do you have attendance problems?
Attendance helps determine course credit. Sometimes new inmates don't take the work seriously, but when they find out that completing courses is a prerequisite for parole, they have less trouble getting to class. If their job assignments make it difficult to schedule class time, we work around the job schedule.

Do you assign homework?
The library here is only big enough for 37 inmates at a time, so we can't assign research papers or anything like that. In general, we don't expect our students to work after class, but many do. They can take books back to the cellblock. There isn't much to do here evenings. I started a classroom library a few years ago so my students can get reading material.

What do your students do when they're not in class?
They all have job assignments. They work in the laundry, on the farm, in the kitchen, or they have janitorial duties on the cellblock. We have an extensive recreation program, too, with a variety of team sports: volleyball, basketball, baseball, football. There's weightlifting and a handball court.

Quite a few of our inmates run. Each year there's a run-a-thon, which was started about eight years ago. People from the community sponsor the runners, so for every mile they run they collect money and contribute it to charity.

What kind of diploma do your students get?
For a course, we print a certificate in our print shop with the logo of the state department of corrections. Because we aren't a certified school district, our certificates don't mean a lot to people outside the system. Those who pass the GED get the state department of education certificate.

What hours do you teach?
I have two three-hour classes of about 30 students each between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., five days a week. Then I teach the GED program to another 20 students three days a week from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. I have an hour a day prep time.

What's the hardest part of teaching here?
Contractual problems. The faculty bargains with the commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the office of administration. The commonwealth lumps us with all other state employees in terms of what they're willing to put in a contract.

Who does the bargaining?
We have a statewide local, a PSEA affiliate called the Correctional Institutions Vocational Education Association, with a faculty rep in each institution. I've been acting president since July.

We've been bargaining since November 1984 and have yet to sign a contract because the state refuses to recognize us as teachers. They try to limit our pay and benefits so we get no more than they give all other state employees.

Is there much staff turnover?
The staff used to be fairly stable, but our contract problems threaten the whole system. Public schools in this area now have higher starting salaries than we do. When the past president of our local left for a job in a public school, his salary doubled—and his contract year went from 12 months to 185 days.

We've also just been shifted to civil service status. That means our teachers can transfer into higher-paying job classifications in other parts of the state government—and we expect that a fourth of them will.

Our wages are so low we can't get qualified voc ed people. They can do repair work at home and make more money.

What brought you to Rockview?
When I graduated from college in the late 1970s, openings for secondary social studies teachers were scarce. A friend told me about an opening here; I applied and got the job.

I'd never given this type of assignment a thought—never even knew there was an educational program here. It was just a lucky chance—I say lucky, because I like what I'm doing.

That's why you're still here?
Right. I like my job—and I'm naive enough to think things will change. There's a new administration in Harrisburg and a factfinders' report due, so maybe we can settle our differences.

But if after bargaining for more than three years, we can't get an acceptable contract, we'll never change the situation. At that point, I'll have to seriously consider moving into the public schools. For all of us, it's a matter of economics. □

RESOURCES

TV/Radio Tips

The Eleanor Roosevelt Story—*Arts & Entertainment Network, Tuesday, Mar. 1, and Tuesday, Mar. 8, 8-9 p.m. ET.* Two-part Academy Award–winning documentary series on the life of this former First Lady.

Afterschool Specials—*ABC-TV, Thursday, Mar. 3, 4-5 p.m. ET:* "Wanted: The Perfect Guy." A boy looks for "Mr. Right" for his divorced mother. *Wednesday, Mar. 16, 4-5 p.m. ET:* "Daddy Can't Read." See viewer's guide on page 17.

The Achievers—*CBN, Sunday, Mar. 6, and Sunday, Mar. 13, noon-12:30 p.m. ET.* Two-part series about the accomplishments of 11 outstanding youngsters.

Dolphin Adventure—*Discovery Channel, Sunday, Mar. 6, 10-11 p.m. ET.* A special look at the intelligence of dolphins.

National Geographic Special—*PBS, Wednesday, Mar. 8, 8-9 p.m. ET:* "Inside the Soviet Circus." An in-depth look at the Russian circus. For free study guide, write to National Geographic Study Guide, c/o Chevron, 742 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710.

Schoolbreak Special—*CBS-TV, Tuesday, Mar. 15, 4-5 p.m. ET (note this change from the May 31 date listed in CBS Schoolbreak Special study guide):* "The Day They Came To Arrest the Book." Rebroadcast. The text of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* sets off a book censorship crisis. *Tuesday, Mar. 29, 4-5 p.m. ET:* "Home Sweet Homeless." A mother and her three sons are evicted and forced by circumstances to live in their car. For a free viewer's guide to both programs, prepared by KIDSNET, write to CBS Educational and Community Services Dept., 51 W. 52nd St., New York, NY 10019.

Inherit the Wind—*NBC-TV, Sunday, March 20, 9-11 p.m. ET.* Kirk Douglas, Jason Robards, Darren McGavin, and Jean Simmons star in this new TV film

NBC-TV's new version of "Inherit the Wind" airs Sunday evening, March 20.

about the Scopes "monkey trial" of 1925, in which a teacher was prosecuted for teaching the Darwin theory of evolution.

The Honorable Court—*PBS, Monday, Mar. 21 and Monday, Mar. 28; check local listings for times.* Two-part series providing a unique behind-the-scenes look at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Great Violin Mystery—*Discovery Channel, Tuesday, Mar. 22, 5-6 p.m. ET. Rebroadcast Friday, Mar. 25, noon-1 p.m. ET.* The history of violin making.

Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson: A Look Back into History—*American Public Radio, beginning in March; check local listings for dates and times.* A series of nine 30-minute programs portraying a relationship between our second and third Presidents that came rather late in their lives.

NOVA—*PBS, sometime in March; check local listings for date and time:* "The Miracle of Life." The first film ever to record the incredible chain of events that turns an egg and a sperm into a newborn baby.

A Place at the Table—*NBC-TV, sometime in March; check local listings for date and time.* Family drama about hungry children in America. □

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Color Slide Source and Reference of World Art. Lists 70,000 individual color slides (for sale individually or in sets) of masterpieces of architecture, sculpture, painting, and the minor arts—from all periods, many cultures. 465 pp. $10 postpaid to NEA members. Or ask for free brochures, *Surveys of World Art* and *Color Slides for Art Education*. American Library Color Slide Co., Educational Services, Dept. CS8, P.O. Box 5810, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

TEACHER TESTING

What Is the Appropriate Role of Testing in the Teaching Profession? Gregory R. Anrig, Norene F. Daly, Sharon P. Robinson, Louis J. Rubin, and John G. Weiss; preface by Mary Hatwood Futrell. Spotlights issues involving control over content, construction, and use of teacher tests and explores appropriate and equitable policies and procedures. 88 pp. 1987. Stock no. 1460-X-00-D. $8.95. NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

FAMILY LIVING

I Love My Family. A kit designed to help elementary teachers discuss with students the importance of family in all its myriad forms. Contains poster, student activities, and photo masters. Free. The *Better Homes and Gardens* Family Network, "I Love My Family," 1133 Avenue of the Americas, 16th Floor, New York, NY 10036.

SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES

Human Needs and Nature's Balance: Population, Resources, and the Environment. Assesses global trends in population growth, food production, water use, and energy consumption—and related policy issues. Student booklet reproducible for classroom use, 16 pp., $2 plus $1 p&h; two or more copies, $1.75 each plus $1 or 5 percent more (whichever is greater) p&h. Free teacher guide included with each order. Prepaid. Population Reference Bureau, Circulation Dept., 777 14th St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005.

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Free Stuff for Kids. A whole book of up-to-a-dollar items kids can order from such sources as state and foreign tourist offices, trade associations, and manufacturers. 11th rev. ed. Order no. 0-671-64738-5. $3.95 from booksellers, or by purchase order from 1-800-223-2348, or by mail prepaid (add 75¢ per copy plus your state sales tax) from Meadowbrook/Simon & Schuster, Mail Order Dept., 200 Old Tappan Rd., Tappan, NJ 06475.

SPRING PLANTING

The Youth Gardening Book. Lynn Ocone and Eve Pranis. Shows teachers and other adults how to set up a gardening program for kids. Revised 1987. 148 pp. $10 to NEA members, plus $2 p&h. National Gardening Association, Dept. NEA, 180 Flynn Ave., Burlington, VT 05401.

Celebrate Arbor Day! The nonprofit National Arbor Day Foundation offers an Arbor Day planner's kit that—among other things—tells when Arbor Day occurs in each state. Free. National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Ave., Nebraska City, NE 68410. □

Idea Exchange

Rehearsals for Responsible Citizenship

The long, complex Presidential election process is moving forward in earnest—and in classrooms nationwide, future voters are watching, fascinated.

To many Association members, the primaries and caucuses offer the chance to teach some lessons about how individual citizens help choose our government.

In Iowa and New Hampshire, a national project called US88 is sponsoring a New Voters Program for high school and college students. Its premise? That if students learn what's at stake in the decisions our future leaders will make, they'll be eager to take part in the electoral process—and so help reverse the dismal record of nonvoting youth. The program also aims to make sure the new voters will be informed voters.

US88, an initiative of the Washington-based Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies, has provided Iowa and New Hampshire high schools with free kits, each outlining a range of positions on a national issue like farm policy or Central America. Students work up questions on their issue to ask the Presidential candidates—and selected students do just that, in US88's live forums. The New Voters Project also helps arrange mock primaries and caucuses.

Believing it's never too early to learn good political habits, Association member Linda Nelson of Council Bluffs, Iowa, prepares her sixth graders at Carter Lake Elementary School to be informed, enthusiastic voters.

On Feb. 8, the day of the Iowa precinct caucuses, Nelson's class held its own mock caucus. In January, Nelson's students had drawn names of Presidential candidates and studied their positions on education issues to present in class hearings. For resources, they used US88's candidate profiles and issue packets, as well as the candidate questionnaire responses printed in the October 1987 *NEA Today*.

Nelson's students held a Republican and a Democratic caucus in the classroom at the same time. Each party had to attract at least 15 percent of the class in order to be viable—that is, to send one representative to a hypothetical county convention.

The caucuses got an extra measure of vividness from the presence of Iowa state legislator Emil Pavitch, who represents the Council Bluffs-Carter Lake district—and has been attending Nelson's classroom caucuses since 1980.

Early preparation for political involvement pays off, Nelson notes. "A student who took part in my classroom caucuses in 1980 is now 19 and attending a precinct caucus as a voter," she reports. □

No-Nonsense Materials for the Next Crop of Voters

The Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies has developed materials to help high school students ask informed questions—not only when they encounter a candidate in a forum, but when they watch debates or read candidates' or officeholders' positions. Accompanying teachers' guides suggest ways of fitting these into the curriculum in different ways and for different levels of ability.

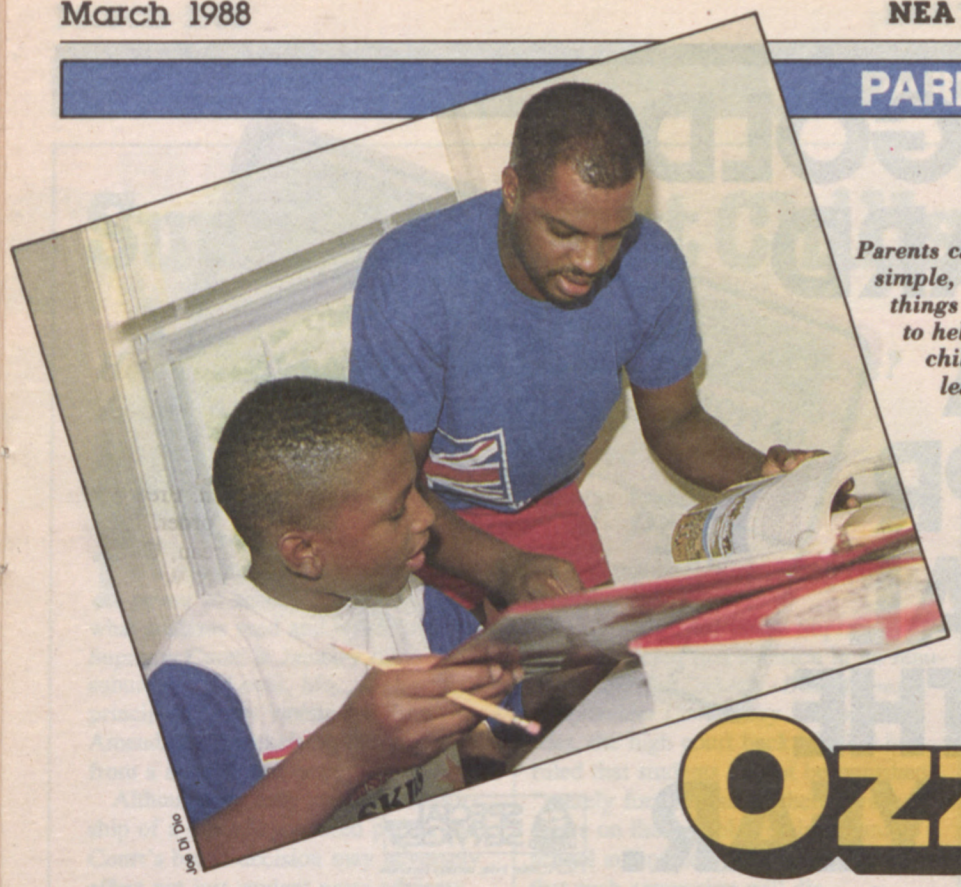
► *Profiles and Perspectives* provides background information about the candidates and their answers to six questions on the office of President ($5).

► *The Candidates' Views* gives candidates' answers to questions on five policy areas—the federal budget deficit, the global spread of nuclear weapons, agriculture policy, Central America, and international trade ($5).

► Crash course packets, designed to be useful throughout the campaign and beyond, cover the five policy areas listed above and U.S.–Third World relations. Each crash course packet costs $45, except for the one on nuclear weapons, which contains a film and is $60. Crash courses on long-term health care and working families may soon become available.

To order, to request a catalog, or to get information on bulk orders, write the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies, 316 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20003, or phone Brooks Clapp at 1-202-547-7227.

PARENTS



Joe Di Dio

Parents can do many simple, enjoyable things at home to help their children learn.

Joe Di Dio

Ozzie Doesn't Live Here Anymore

With the right guidance, even today's busy parents can be helpful partners in the education process.

The 1990s aren't far off, and the classic 1950s American family is little more than a faint memory. Today's versions of Ozzie and Harriet are divorced, with Harriet raising the kids by herself. June Lockhart has gotten a data-processing job to bring in some extra money, and Lassie and Timmy are home alone until six o'clock.

Changing family styles have brought new problems. Free time and energy are scarce. But certain accommodations, small and large, can keep the single or working parent closely linked to the school and working along with teachers and other school employees to enrich the day-to-day education experience.

Of course, you can't compel the parent who simply refuses to become involved in his or her child's school life. And you don't want to add endless hours of extra phone calls and conferences to your own schedule.

But sometimes the difference between the uninvolved parent and the actively helpful parent is just a matter of communication. Sometimes parents simply need to know that you're on their side, or need some specific suggestions as to how they can help.

► Arrange to hold parent conferences before school or in the evening, so working parents can be there without taking much time off.

► If single parenthood hasn't been part of your personal experience, review your feelings about it. Avoid terms like "broken home"—and remember that a mother who has been divorced may have a last name different from her children's.

► Suggest to the administration that report cards and school reports be sent to noncustodial as well as custodial parents.

► When planning school events involving parents, try to arrange for a baby-sitting room. The parents may be willing to pay for the service, a high school home economics class or service group might help, or the PTA may be willing to provide the funds. Be sure to advertise it in advance.

Whatever the family situation, the parent-teacher conference should be a cornerstone for school-family communications. Here are some tips for making it just that.

► Arrange conferences *before* problems arise or become serious. Make them an occasion for discussing children's successes as well as failures.

► Allay parents' fears of the conference. As Dorothy Rich, president of the Home and School Institute, points out, "What happens when the parent-as-adult returns to school, or has dealings with teachers, is that the parent as child/student returns. Many parents still enter school buildings flooded with old memories, angers, and disappointments." Simply notifying them of the conference in a positive, nonthreatening manner can set a productive tone for the meeting.

► Help parents prepare for the conference so they can get the most out of it. Suggest that they write down in advance concerns they want to discuss with you (about the child or the child's progress, or about classroom or school policies) and questions they might ask ("Does my child get along with the others? Is she working up to her ability?")

► Make sure no parent can justly complain after a conference that you "talked down." Rather than telling parents what they need to learn to work with the school, ask what they feel they need to learn. Encourage them to bring their own life experiences into the process.

► Use the conference to write a joint parent-teacher plan for the child's progress.

A recent study indicates that the most important factor in children's school success is parents' active participation in the learning process. Don't assume that parents know about all the ways they can help their children learn. Politely clue them in, in various ways:

► Suggest methods of improving the home learning environment—for example, providing a place for the child to study and setting rules for homework and television.

► Periodically send home descriptions of joint activities for parents and children. These should be easy, enjoyable, and not very time-consuming. Have the child search for the best bargain at the supermarket or identify instruments playing on the car radio, for example, and a trip to the store becomes an extension of math class and music class. If you have time, individualize the suggestions to fit students' interests or weaknesses.

► Invite parents into the classroom to watch you so they can learn from your teaching techniques.

► Hold workshops for parents on helping their children master specific skills.

► Give some homework assignments that involve the family, like having students help plan and budget the family meals for a week.

Break down school-family barriers through communication. Parents will feel more a part of the education process if they're informed.

► Every month, send home a newsletter describing class projects and upcoming field trips, mentioning as many children as possible.

► Especially in the upper grades, give parents a course synopsis that includes homework expectations and grading criteria.

► Call parents, or send home a note, when their child does exceptionally well—not just to report deficiencies.

—Karen Deans

Beyond Bakesales

Two groups that have been active in promoting parent-teacher cooperation beyond the baking-cookies-for-the-bakesale level are the Home and School Institute (HSI) and the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE), both headquartered in Washington, D.C. Many of the tips on this page come from them.

In cooperation with HSI, the NEA Professional Library has recently published *Schools and Parents United: A Practical Approach to Student Success*, a multimedia kit designed to promote parental involvement and community support. The books, videotape, filmstrips, and workshop handouts can be used together in a series of 12 workshops on such topics as responding to the changing family and the family's role in preventing discipline problems and substance abuse. Price for the entire kit is $193.88 (stock no. 0275-X-00-D); individual components can also be ordered separately from the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

For information about the many other materials available from the Home and School Institute, write to HSI, Special Projects Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

NEA, as one of the 23 organizations in the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, is also helping to spearhead a brochure, *Developing Home/School Partnerships: Guidelines for School Districts*, for April release. Single copies will be free from Barbara J. Yentzer, NEA Executive Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. □

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Include income from all sources during this year. (Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis of repayment.)

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State Association: _____

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Position: _____

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YOU AND THE LAW

Supreme Court Chills Student Press Rights

How far can students go in reporting school news? About as far as the principal's office, says a 5-3 Supreme Court decision. The case could have implications for teacher rights as well.

In a sweeping affirmation of the power of school officials to limit what students read and write, the Supreme Court in January ruled that a suburban St. Louis, Mo., high school principal did not violate the First Amendment by excising two pages from a student newspaper.

Although the case involved censorship of a school-sponsored paper, the Court's broad decision may adversely affect not just student press advisers but all teachers, threatening their ability to expose students to controversial ideas.

The case, styled *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, arose when principal Robert Reynolds of Hazelwood East High School removed two pages from the May 13, 1983, edition of *Spectrum*, the official school newspaper. Reynolds objected to two articles. The first described three Hazelwood East students' experiences with pregnancy. Although the story used pseudonyms, Reynolds feared that the pregnant students might be identifiable from the text and felt the topic was "inappropriate" for younger students in the school.

The second article discussed the impact of divorce on Hazelwood students and quoted one student by name as complaining that her father wasn't "spending enough time with my mom, my sister and I." Reynolds felt that the student's parents should have been given an opportunity to respond to the remarks or consent to their publication.

The students sued in federal court, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled that the principal's act of censorship violated the First Amendment.

By a 5-3 majority, the Supreme Court reversed that decision in its January ruling. In *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, the high court back in 1969 had ruled that students cannot be punished "merely for expressing their personal views on the school premises" unless school authorities reasonably believe that such expression will disrupt the school. But a different rule applies, the Court said in *Hazelwood*, to "school-sponsored publications, theatrical productions and other expressive activities that students, parents, and members of the public might reasonably perceive to bear the imprimatur of the school."

School authorities are entitled to exercise greater control over these forms of student speech, the Court said, to ensure that "readers or listeners are not exposed to material that may be inappropriate for their level of maturity, and that the views of the individual speaker are not erroneously attributed to the school."

School-sponsored publications, plays, and the like, the Court said, "may fairly be described as a part of the school curriculum" over which school officials may exercise "editorial control. . .so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns."

In an angry dissent, Justices Brennan, Marshall, and Blackmun charged the majority with condoning "brutal censorship."

"The mere fact of school sponsorship," the dissenters wrote, "does not license such thought control in the high school, whether through school suppression of disfavored viewpoints or through official assessment of topic sensitivity." In addition to violating the journalist's right to speak, the principal's action infringed on other "students' right to receive information and ideas," they added.

Jeff Roberson

Hazelwood (Mo.) East High School newspaper adviser Cheryl Stoller, left, and her journalism students review the high court's ruling.

The censorship perpetrated in this case, the dissenters argued, did not serve a legitimate pedagogical purpose, "unless one believes that the purpose of the school newspaper is to teach students that the press ought never report bad news, express unpopular views, or print a thought that might upset its sponsors." And a school's responsibility to "inculcate moral and political values is not a general warrant to act as thought police," they wrote.

The Court's decision represents a stunning defeat for the rights of student journalists. In ruling that students who staff school-sponsored publications enjoy little or no First Amendment protection, the Court overturned some 20 lower federal court decisions rendered over the last 10 years.

What impact will the Hazelwood case have on the rights of teachers? For starters, journalism advisers will now have to kowtow to principals who want to keep sensitive or controversial issues off the pages of student publications. NEA has argued that an adviser can refuse to obey an administrator's order to censor the school paper because to do so would violate the constitutional rights of students. Such an argument is no longer viable. Advisers who fail to wield a heavy blue pencil may find their jobs at risk because the principal objects to what their students write.

More important, the Court's ruling has dire implications for the rights of *all* teachers. While the Supreme Court has never ruled on whether teachers enjoy a right to academic freedom (and did not specifically address that issue in this case), the legal reasoning used in *Hazelwood* could be applied to severely limit the right of teachers to speak freely in the classroom or to assign outside readings.

Central to the Court's analysis was the fact that the newspaper was a part of the curriculum and carried the school's imprimatur. But a school arguably has an even greater interest in controlling what's said to a captive classroom audience or assigned for required reading. Even more than a school newspaper, a teacher is an "agent" of the school and carries its imprimatur.

In short, if school officials can censor articles in an official publication because they're sensitive, controversial, or age-inappropriate, then they can also censor reading lists, library books, and teachers themselves.

In the wake of *Hazelwood*, journalism advisers should work for the adoption of clear and specific guidelines for what their students can and cannot publish, including a speedy administrative appeals process for challenging decisions to censor. Because their jobs may be at stake, advisers who are in doubt whether to delete or censor a particular article should defer the decision to the building principal.

Teachers interested in the rights of student journalists can write to the Student Press Law Center, 800 18th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20006, for further information and guidelines.

—Mike Simpson,
NEA Office of General Counsel

NEA Members React to Student Press Case

"All of the publicity has made my students analyze the news much more now. Some were a little turned off by some reporters who only wanted to interview students who disagreed with the decision. I take to the principal only those articles that I feel are particularly sensitive. I think that's only happened three or four times in the past three years." [Stoller joined the Hazelwood faculty after the case went to court.]

Cheryl Stoller
Adviser, *Spectrum*
Hazelwood (Mo.) East
High School

"Even though it won't affect our student newspaper [Tagliarini is the only staff person to see the paper before it goes to press], the decision gives principals the power to decide arbitrarily what will or won't be printed. It's ironic that kids are being taught about the protections of the Constitution, and then they're told these rights don't apply when it comes to putting out the student newspaper."

John Tagliarini
Adviser, *Bear Facts*
Bergenfield (N.J.) High School

"The breadth of the decision is what bothers me most. Rather than dealing with the specific merits of what the principal ordered deleted, the court issued a broad decision that gives principals too much power. We're fortunate here. The day of the ruling, the principal assured the newspaper staff that they shouldn't feel threatened by the decision."

Mike Hoover
Adviser, *Lasso*
George Mason Junior-Senior
High School
Falls Church, Va.

COVER STORY

'Whiz Kid' Image Ma Problems of Asian A

Asian Americans, some say, are a 'model minority.' But while many Asian students excel scholastically, thousands—especially recent Indochinese refugees—are struggling at home and in school.

Suzanna Kang (*cover photo*), a 17-year-old Korean American student at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandra, Va., fits most Americans' stereotype of Asian American students.

She is bright and hard-working, carries nearly a 4.0 grade point average, especially likes science and math, is headed for a good college or university (most likely on a scholarship), and is very close to her family—her mother, Mun Ja, sister, Christina, and brother, Andrew.

"I guess I do fit the Asian American superachiever image," says Kang, "but I know there are many Asian American kids who aren't doing as well, especially those who've recently immigrated to this country, kids who are struggling to learn English."

Last year, the NEA Study Committee on Asian/Pacific Islander Concerns drew the same conclusion, noting that "the image of Asian and Pacific Islanders as a relatively trouble-free minority" of model students is not realistic, nor does it "do justice to those students who are struggling to get a public school education in what for some of them is still a new and alien culture."

The media have helped to perpetuate Americans' stereotypical view of most Asian kids as supersmart and wildly successful, coming from stable homes with parents who encourage educational achievement. In the past year or so, *Time*, *USA Today*, and *The New York Times Magazine* have all featured superachieving Asian American kids in major feature stories.

The whiz-kid image fits many of the children of Asian immigrant families who arrived in this country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following passage of a 1965 law liberalizing immigrant quotas. Most of these immigrants came from Hong Kong, South Korea, India, and the Philippines. And the image fits many children of the more than 100,000 Indochinese (primarily Vietnamese) immigrants who arrived in this country following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Both these groups included mostly middle- to upper-income professional people who were fairly well-educated and who passed on to their children an abiding interest in education and a strong work ethic.

A few statistics indicate just how well many Asians are doing academically, especially in math and science. While Asians make up just 2.1 percent of the U.S. population, last fall's freshman class at Harvard was 14 percent Asian American; at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 20 percent; and at the University of California-Berkeley, 25 percent.

Of the 70 students who've won scholarships in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search since 1981, 20 have been of Asian descent. In 1986, Asians won all five top scholarship awards from Westinghouse. One of the 40 1986 Westinghouse finalists was David Kuo, a Taiwanese American and the third of three brothers to win a finalist slot in the Westinghouse competition. The Kuos thereby became the first family in the history of the 47-year-old competition to have a child in the Westinghouse finals for three consecutive years.

Another indicator of achievement: 70 percent of Asian American 18-year-olds—but just 28 percent of all 18-year olds—take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). An Asian student's average math SAT score is 518 out of 800—43 points above the national average.

The Nguyen family of Seattle, Wash., is an example of almost unbelievable achievement. Only a decade ago, Thoa Nguyen was in a Vietnamese prison camp, separated from his wife, Son, and their seven children. The family was reunited and arrived in this country in 1984. Last June three Nguyen sons and two daughters received their bachelor's degrees in engineering from the University of Washington. A sixth child graduated from the University of Michigan last year, and the Nguyens' 12-year-old son, Thien, is so bright he's been able to skip several grades. He's now a sophomore in engineering, also at the University of Washington.

But even for the superachievers, life in school and out is not a bed of roses. Some outstanding Asian students apparently are being denied entry into some of the nation's best universities because Asian students account for "too high a percentage" of student enrollments. Other achieving Asian American students get the cold shoulders from their peers—their hard work ethic and high achievement levels turn off their fellow students and make social adjustment extremely difficult.

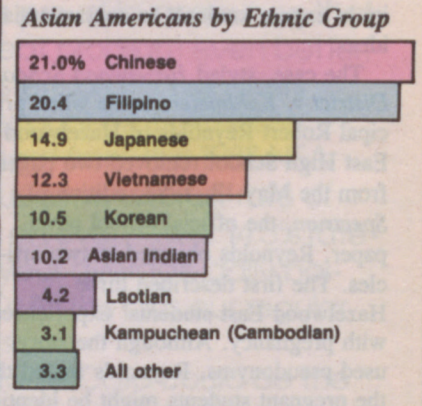
For thousands of other Asian Americans—a high percentage of the 600,000 Indochinese refugees who fled Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in the late '70s—the problems are far different. Many of this recent wave of refugees lived in poor surroundings in their homelands. They came to the U.S. with few skills and little education. They speak little English, have a tough time finding a decent job, often share housing with relatives. Their children find it difficult to learn; some are attracted to drugs and gangs; many drop out of school.

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, 64 percent of the Indochinese households headed by refugees who arrived in 1980 are on public assistance. Overall, say population researchers, except for the Japanese and Filipinos, a higher percentage of Asian American families with school-age children than of comparable white families live below the government's poverty line. The poor Asian households are all over the country, but the largest numbers are in California, Texas, Washington, Louisiana, and Virginia.

Rick Brady

Alexandria, Va., high school senior Suzanna Kang maintains a 4.0 GPA while working 15 hours a week.

Asian Americans by Ethnic Group



Source: Population Reference Bureau estimates, 1985.

COVER STORY

sks Americans

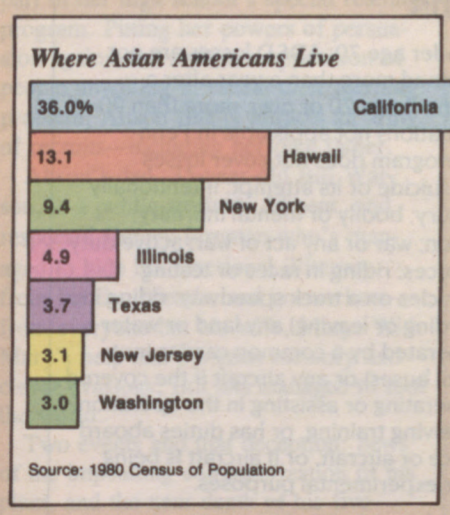
Rich Frishman

James Aronovsky/Picture Group

Top: Resettled in Seattle, Wash., from Vietnam, the Nguyen family boasts seven high-achieving children, six of them recent college graduates.

Above: In sharp contrast to the Nguyens' success is the struggle of this extended Hmong family of 21, who share a three-bedroom apartment in San Diego.

The school systems in cities like San Diego, Calif., and St. Paul, Minn., are adjusting to the influx of immigrants, but progress toward assimilating Asian families into the school and community mainstream has been uneven. Schools in some of the communities with recent influxes of Asian students had been used to educating primarily white students, with only small percentages of minority children, chiefly Black and Hispanic.



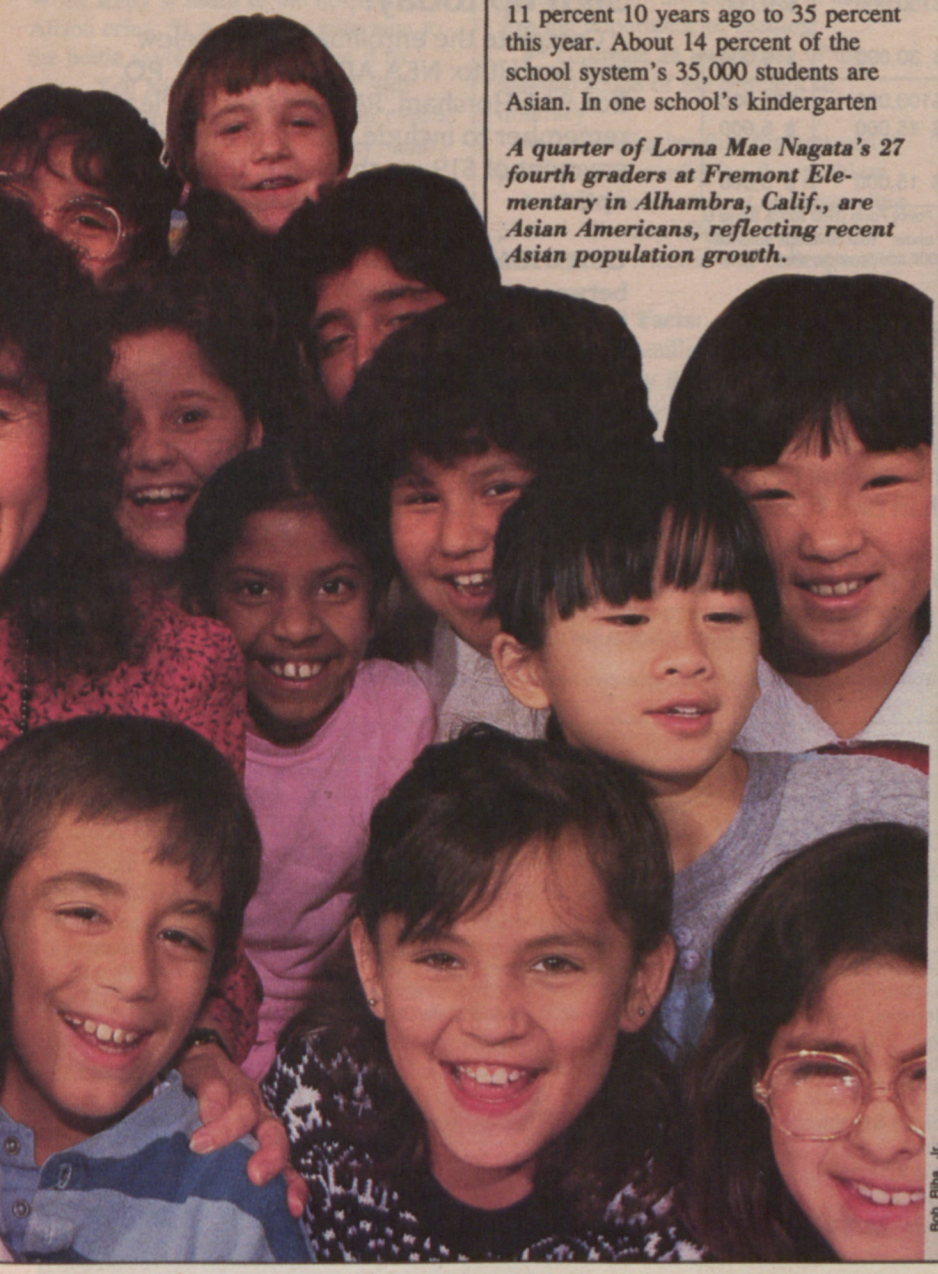
Now the number of minority students in these schools has doubled, even tripled, in just the last decade.

In the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, for example, there are now more than 30,000 Asian students. Twelve schools currently enroll more foreign-born than U.S.-born students.

In the Washington suburb of Arlington, Va., nearly half the 14,000 students are minority (about 18 percent Black, 15 percent Hispanic, 12 percent of Asian descent). The school system provides an intake center to help newcomers—both parents and students—get adjusted.

The center's staff, says coordinator Martha Pizarro, speak at least six languages—Khmer, Vietnamese, Lao, Thai, French, and Chinese—and are trained to evaluate students' skills and to assess their needs. Most students are placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes until their English improves enough for them to move to "regular" classes.

In St. Paul, the percentage of minority students has risen from just over 11 percent 10 years ago to 35 percent this year. About 14 percent of the school system's 35,000 students are Asian. In one school's kindergarten class of 167, 65 are Asian, most of them children of Hmong refugees who were sponsored by Twin Cities churches and began arriving in the area in the 1970s.



Bob Riha, Jr.

A quarter of Lorna Mae Nagata's 27 fourth graders at Fremont Elementary in Alhambra, Calif., are Asian Americans, reflecting recent Asian population growth.

"Junior and senior high students who've come here in recent years are having the most difficult time adjusting," points out Jean Takeshita, a multicultural resource teacher with the St. Paul school system's Multicultural Center. "The young children seem to get along very well. Even those who may start out having a hard time with English catch up quickly."

St. Paul schools use a wide range of techniques to reach out to Asian youngsters, including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and a variety of social services.

Takeshita's primary job is to help teachers and their nonminority students adjust to minority students and vice versa.

"We encourage our teachers not to look at minority children as having to fit into one mold," she explains. "Instead we try to point out that each child brings to the classroom a different set of cultural characteristics—differences in values, in home life, in economic circumstances. Even appreciating small differences—for example, recognizing that not all children like or need cereal and milk for breakfast—helps." Takeshita finds that non-minority students are often the key to helping minority students break through learning barriers.

California teacher of the year Lorna Mae Nagata, a third generation Japanese American and fourth grade teacher at Fremont Elementary in Alhambra, also applies this peer approach to help both majority and minority students get along better and work together.

To help any student requires that teachers know something of their students' backgrounds, their family values. Notes Nagata, "All of these play a role in how the student reacts in class."

Though there are differences between the various ethnic groups of Asian Americans, she explains, "Asian children generally tend to be somewhat reserved. They tend not to raise their hands unless they're really sure they've got the correct answer. In some situations, this reserve might be misinterpreted. The teacher might, for example, think the children don't understand when they really do."

Appreciating and respecting cultural differences—and adjusting to them—appear to be the best way teachers can help their Asian students—all students—to do a better job in school. The teacher's influence can't be overestimated.

Alexandria, Va.'s Suzanna Kang recalls how her teachers at T.C. Williams High opened her eyes to the world of science. "I wasn't really that interested before," she says, "but my teachers showed me just how exciting science can be. Now I plan to make it my career."

—Bill Fischer

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Who is eligible?

All NEA members are eligible. Eligible dependents include: spouses (unless legally separated); unmarried children (including legally adopted, foster and stepchildren) age two weeks to 21 years (or to age 25 if dependent upon you for support). No dependents in active military service are eligible. If both you and your spouse are insured as members, only one of you may include your children as dependents. A spouse and children who are covered as members under the plan are not eligible for coverage as dependents.

You'll be covered as long as this program is in effect, if you maintain membership in the NEA and continue to make your required contribution. Dependents' coverage will remain in effect until their eligibility requirements are no longer met or until your coverage terminates, whichever occurs first. Your spouse may elect to continue coverage if you die.

AD&D benefits are payable as follows:

If Coverage Is For:	Annual Contribution	Accidents Occurring While A Passenger On A Public Conveyance	Any Other Covered Accident
Member Only	$19	$130,000*	$30,000
Member and Eligible Spouse	$19	$100,000* $ 30,000	$20,000 $10,000
Member and Each Eligible Child	$19	$100,000* $ 30,000	$20,000 $10,000
Member, Eligible Spouse and Each Eligible Child	$19	$100,000* $ 15,000 $ 15,000	$20,000 $ 5,000 $ 5,000

Policy Form ORD 70075 Serial U

*These benefits will increase as described under "Your coverage automatically increases," up to a maximum of $50,000 additional for each member.

Dismemberment benefits.

One-half of the full benefit amount shown in the chart is payable for loss of one foot, one hand, or sight of one eye, in any one covered accident. The full benefit amount is paid if more than one such loss (or death) results from the same accident. (See Exclusions.)

Exclusions

For insureds under age 70, AD&D losses are not covered if sustained more than a year after a covered accident; if age 70 or over, more than 90 days. (Time limitations not applicable in Pennsylvania.) The program does not cover losses resulting from: suicide or its attempt; intentionally self-inflicted injury; bodily or mental infirmity; disease; infection; war or any act of war; active duty in the armed forces; riding in races or testing automotive vehicles on a track speedway; riding in (including boarding or leaving) any land or water conveyance operated by a common carrier (not including school buses) or any aircraft if the covered individual is operating or assisting in the operation, is giving or receiving training, or has duties aboard such conveyance or aircraft, or if aircraft is being used for test or experimental purposes.

Sign up today!

Complete the enrollment form below and send it to: NEA AD&D Program, P.O. Box 947, Horsham, PA 19044-0947. Please remember to include your first annual payment of $19, or check the "Bill Me" option.

QUESTIONS? Call toll free, 1-800-523-5877, between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST weekdays.

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__/__/__ __/__/__ (__)_____

Date of Birth Social Security No. Telephone No.

Beneficiary and Relationship: _____
(Example: Mary A. Doe, wife—NOT Mrs. John Doe)

Are you currently an NEA member? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Indicate coverage desired:

☐ Member Only
☐ Member and Spouse*
☐ Member and Each Eligible Child*
☐ Member, Spouse and Each Eligible Child*

*See the "Who is eligible" section for complete eligibility requirements of dependents.

☐ I have enclosed my check for $19 payable to **NEA AD&D Insurance**; or

☐ Please bill me $19 for NEA AD&D Insurance.

Mail to: **NEA AD&D Program**
P.O. Box 947, Horsham, PA 19044-0947

I declare the statements and answers contained herein are complete and true and understand that they are the basis for providing group accident coverage under a policy (or policies) issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America to the NEA Members Insurance Trust. I also declare that I am not already enrolled in the Accidental Death and Dismemberment Program.

Signature of Member X _____

Date _____

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RESOURCES

'Daddy Can't Read'

ABC Afterschool Special explores adult illiteracy from a youthful perspective.

Classroom teachers looking for a vivid way to communicate the importance of mastering reading should consider the upcoming ABC Afterschool Special "Daddy Can't Read." It's scheduled to air Wednesday, March 16, from 4 to 5 p.m. ET, but local air times may vary, so check local listings.

The special is part of "Project Literacy U.S." (PLUS)—a public service campaign of Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Now in its third year, PLUS is a joint outreach and awareness effort to encourage nonreaders to learn reading skills and to motivate readers to volunteer as tutors.

"Daddy Can't Read" is a drama exploring adult illiteracy from a youthful perspective. It's the story of 17-year-old Alison Watson, an energetic and bright student who volunteers to recruit and tutor adult illiterates as part of her high school's special reading program. Pitting her powers of persuasion against the stubborn opposition of people unwilling to reveal their learning problem, Alison finally attracts an army of recruits—including her own father.

Alison's dad, 35-year-old Bill Watson, is a public-spirited, diligent, and respected factory foreman who's managed to hide his functional illiteracy from family, friends, and co-workers—from everyone but his wife, Mary. With Mary's help and his keen memory and clever evasions, Bill has managed to fool the world.

Two events end that deception: news of the impending computerization of his plant, and the near death of his five-year-old daughter, Kelly, to whom he has given an overdose of medication. When Kelly is taken to the hospital, Alison cries, "I left a huge note next to the bottle saying I already gave it to her... You *had* to have seen it." Bill admits, "I can't read, okay? I can't read!"

It takes commitment, ingenuity, and tenacity, but Alison's will does prevail, and Bill and his co-workers join teacher Jason Ruigh's class to learn to read.

"Daddy Can't Read" is closed-captioned for the hearing impaired.

Edward Albert and Cheryl Arrut star as father and daughter in "Daddy Can't Read."

STUDY GUIDE

Grade Level: 5 through 9.

Subject Areas: language arts, social studies, vocational education, special education.

General Objectives:

► To explore the social and financial implications of illiteracy and to emphasize the importance of reading

► To create an awareness of the national scope of the problem of illiteracy

► To emphasize that students can participate in remedying this problem

► To increase student understanding of how illiteracy affects relationships with family, friends, and colleagues.

Background Facts:

► Over 23 million adults in the U.S. are functionally illiterate. This means their reading, writing, and math skills are at or below the fourth grade level.

► Over 30 million adults are semi-literate, with basic skills at fifth through eighth grade levels.

► 13 percent of America's workers have eighth grade skills or less and are unable to perform technical jobs.

► 1.3 million legal and illegal immigrants in the U.S. have difficulty coping in an English-speaking society.

Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. On the chalkboard, print VR 23 MLLN DLTS R NBL T RD. Ask students to read and translate it. If needed, fill in the vowels so it reads: "Over 23 million adults are unable to read." Have students explain why the sentence was difficult to read initially. Explain that reading is really deciphering a code. Ask students how they "broke" the code.
2. Ask students to suggest all the reasons adults of various ages might not have learned to read. What special assistance is available to students now that wasn't offered years ago? Lead students to realize that illiteracy is not related to lack of intelligence.
3. Present your students with a situation in which they need to leave an important message for a nonreader. Encourage students to share their efforts. Compare the accuracy of illustrations to that of printed messages.
4. Ask students to recall when they began to read. Can they identify some of the individual skills they needed, such as letter names and sounds, word meanings and parts, idioms? Do they think they've finished learning to read? What else do they still need to learn? Why is learning to read such a complicated task?
5. As a class, identify daily situations that require reading skills. Divide the students into small groups to develop and act out strategies a person might use in these situations to hide his or her inability to read.

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions:

1. How did Mr. Ruigh help the volunteers learn what it's like to be unable to read? For what reasons might a person volunteer to be a tutor? What skills and personality traits does a good tutor have? What are the rewards of tutoring? Ask any students in your class who have ever tutored or who have helped a sibling or taught a friend to read to tell of their experiences.
2. Was Mr. Jensen, the plant owner, aware that some of his employees could not read? What could he have done differently to make automation less stressful? Why was it impossible for the employees to work if they couldn't read?
3. Have students recall the reasons Mr. Watson gave for not learning to read. Would the same reasons still be given today? In what way did Alison experience the same problems when she had difficulty passing her gym tests? Why do students make fun of others who have problems with certain skills?
4. What did Alison mean when she said, "I'm not ashamed that you can't read. I'm ashamed that you won't do anything about it"? In what ways besides special classes might an adult learn to read?

Post-Viewing Activities:

1. Have students role-play a child trying to persuade a nonreading parent to learn to read.
2. Refer to the local yellow pages to develop a list of technical schools in your area. Assign students to research entrance requirements and to determine if there are any special reading skills needed in the jobs for which the school prepares workers.
3. Have students interview relatives or friends to find out if there are any jobs for nonreaders at their places of work.
4. Have students create original jingles to encourage people to read. Tape-record the jingles and play them for school announcements.
5. Have students seek additional information on literacy projects by contacting resources listed in this guide or other local sources.
6. Students are probably aware that Abraham Lincoln was unable to attend school regularly because of home responsibilities. Have them research how he learned to read, and identify other famous people who did not have traditional schooling. Students may want to refer to a biographical dictionary.
7. Have students examine their own school to see how reading is promoted. As a class, develop a multifaceted promotional campaign to encourage literacy; include posters, public address announcements, and school newspaper ads and editorials. Share these with local PLUS organizations. □

Need Additional Resources?

► A more extensive version of this study guide is available from your local ABC station or from Janice Gretemeyer-Adams, Manager, Community Relations, Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., 1330 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019-5499. It will be mailed automatically to all NEA members who have already signed up to receive complimentary viewers' guides (*see box at top right*).

► For details about obtaining a videocassette of "Daddy Can't Read" (VHS or 3/4 inch) for your school or library, contact Pat Vance, ABC Distribution Company, 825 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10019 (1-800-862-8900).

► Many of the Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) task forces around the country have compiled lists of locally available resources and programs. For more information contact your local ABC or PBS station or write the National PLUS project directors: John Harr, Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., 1330 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019-5499, or Margot Woodwell, WQED, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. Copies of "Building Momentum...Project Literacy U.S."—a pamphlet explaining the scope, goals, and strategies of PLUS are also available from John Harr.

Sign Up for Free Viewers' Guides

Would you like to receive complimentary viewers' guides to future broadcasts appropriate for K-12 students?

In cooperation with the television industry and KIDSNET (the national computerized clearinghouse for children's TV and radio), NEA is compiling a mailing list of Association members interested in receiving these guides as they become available. To get on the list, send your name, curriculum area, grade, and mailing address to Viewers' Guide, NEA Communications, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Written by Association member Camille Faith Marx, sixth grade English and reading teacher at Middle River Middle School in Baltimore County, Md. Produced for Capital Cities/ABC, Inc., by KIDSNET, Washington, D.C., and made possible by ABC Community Relations. Permission granted to copy this study guide for classroom use.

READER POLL RESULTS

Learning Would Be Easier If Only Students Had...

Positive self-concept. Respect for others. Motivation to learn. Concern about the world around them. Caring and involved parents.

If NEA members could have their way, this is the kind of "baggage" today's students would carry into the classroom. Last November, *NEA Today* asked readers what they'd change, if they could, about the experiences, attitudes, habits, and ideas their students bring to school with them.

Students' lack of self-respect ranks high on the list of attitudes teachers would change. "If I, a speech and English teacher, could change just one thing, it would be students' self-concept," says Bev Wicinsky of Winneconne, Wis. "They would like who they are."

If students had a positive self-image, readers say, they would be more tolerant and respectful of others. Barbara Preston, of Moweaqua, Ill., wants more than anything to instill compassion for others in her sixth graders. "Children don't seem to accept differences among their peers," she writes. "Name calling, tripping, hitting, whispering, and nonverbal messages beat down children labeled 'different.'"

Many NEA members are concerned about students' "lack of commitment to learning" and "growing indifference toward school," in the words of Craig Chovanec, a high school teacher in Berlin, Wis. These teachers—from first grade through high school—worry that young people, their parents, and society at large aren't aware of the importance of education.

One reason for this lack of motivation, many members feel, is our society's attitude toward work. "There are jokes on television and in comic strips about avoiding work, how horrible work is, and giving as little as possible on the job," says Cheryl Bender of Kokomo, Ind., who sees these attitudes reflected in her gifted second grade students.

Angelica Santomauro of Jersey City, N.J., suggests, "If students became aware of the struggles over the last century between labor, management, and the U.S. government to get children out of the factories and mines and into classrooms, then they might regard their schooling somewhat differently."

A number of writers are concerned that their students are motivated only by material rewards. "I'd try to wean kids from their belief that the only purpose of school and education is to get a good job," writes Barbara Simon, a high school teacher from Baltimore, Md. "I'd try to teach young people to dream."

And Judith Treichler, a fifth grade teacher in Hamilton Township, N.J., decries the loss of self-motivation when students are offered rewards for learning. "I even had a parent who paid his son for coming to school," she writes.

A large number of NEA members are worried about student apathy toward school, work, society, and the future. Russell Kaiser, president of the Madras Education Association, wishes his Warm Springs, Ore., first graders could understand that "there *is* a purpose to school—that they don't necessarily *have* to be millworkers or loggers like their fathers."

Eva Corwell of Westville, Ill., says her junior high students "seem to believe the world will care for them, that they need not worry about their future"—even though "the community has no industry, nearby communities have depressed industries, and the future seems bleak indeed for this area."

"My students have little or no political interest or knowledge," writes Bruce Lear, a high school language arts teacher in Cherokee, Iowa. Teachers and parents, he says, "need to change apathy into action, to show that a handful of people with a cause *can* change the world."

Wadena, Minn., high school teacher Sharon Boline speaks for many NEA members: "Loving, caring parents who are interested in the educational welfare of their children is the one thing I would like for all my students."

And, several educators add, we're pushing our children too far too fast. "Oh, to be able to slow the pace of growing up!" writes Sherry Baldwin Hayes, a counselor in Skyland, N.C.

"Send me students who believe that their most important task is to learn," writes Mardie Robinson, a language arts teacher in Casper, Wyo., summing up the wishes of scores of NEA colleagues. "It would be an added advantage if they came to me loved, nourished, rested, and unblemished by scars and bruises—visible or hidden."

—Heidi Steffens

Readers, Let Us Hear from You!

What's the most useful thing you ever personally bought for your classroom?

Tell us what it was, in 400 words or less. We'll publish the results of this informal reader poll in the September 1988 *NEA Today*.

Simply write a brief description of the book, tool, audiovisual aid, or other purchase that's given you the most help in your teaching. How has it helped?

Mail your letter or postcard to Classroom Purchase Poll, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, no later than June 1.

ADVERTISEMENT

Today's soldiers would like to thank you, if you're one of the high school guidance counselors or teachers who encouraged them to take advantage of an educational assistance program in the Army.

Not only did you help them to acquire valuable skill training, a sense of discipline, and pride in themselves and their country. You also recommended to them an institution that strongly believes in the pursuit of higher education. So when these soldiers leave the Army, they leave as better people, and better prepared for school; the Army's educational assistance programs guarantee thousands of dollars in financial aid to qualified young men and women who serve two to four years.

Among our soldiers, some will further their education in two- and four-year colleges. Some will pursue vo-tech training. All will continue their schooling more mature, more experienced, and better prepared financially than they were right out of high school.

The Army leadership would also like to thank you–for the bright, energetic people you've sent us. Without them, a high-technology Army like ours just doesn't roll.

Thanks.

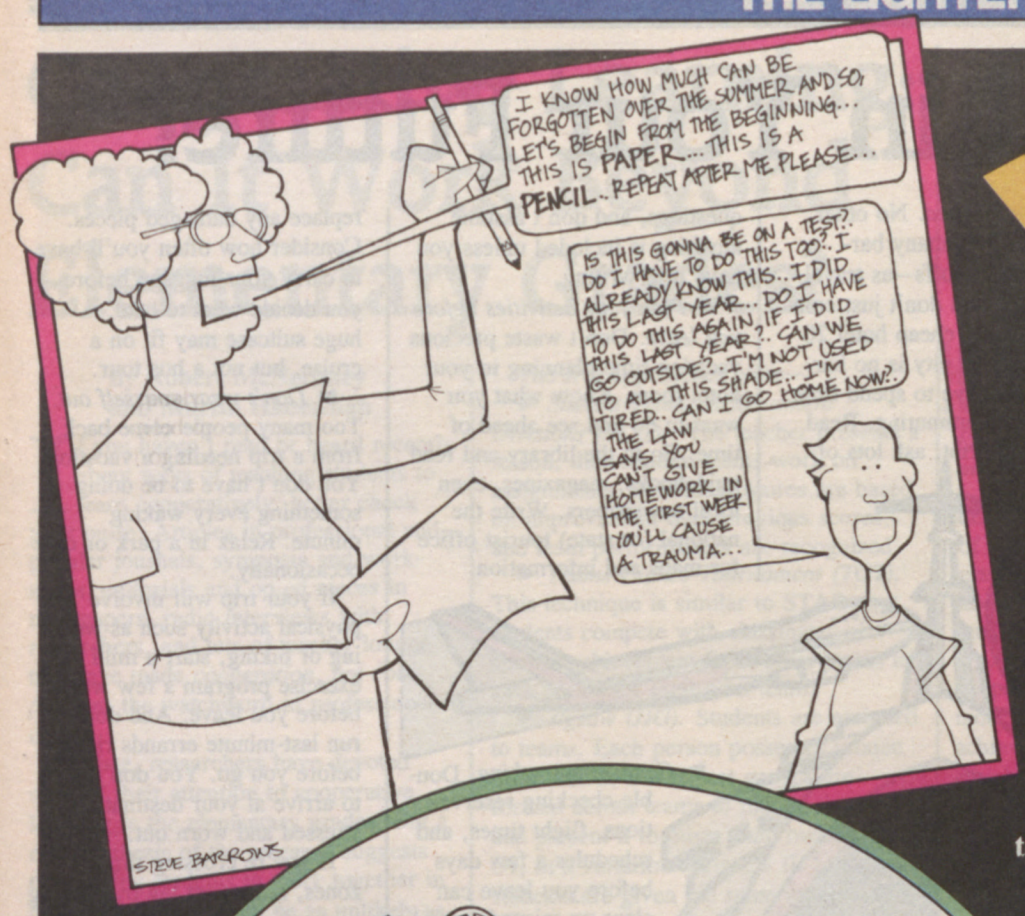
ARMY. BE ALL YOU CAN BE.

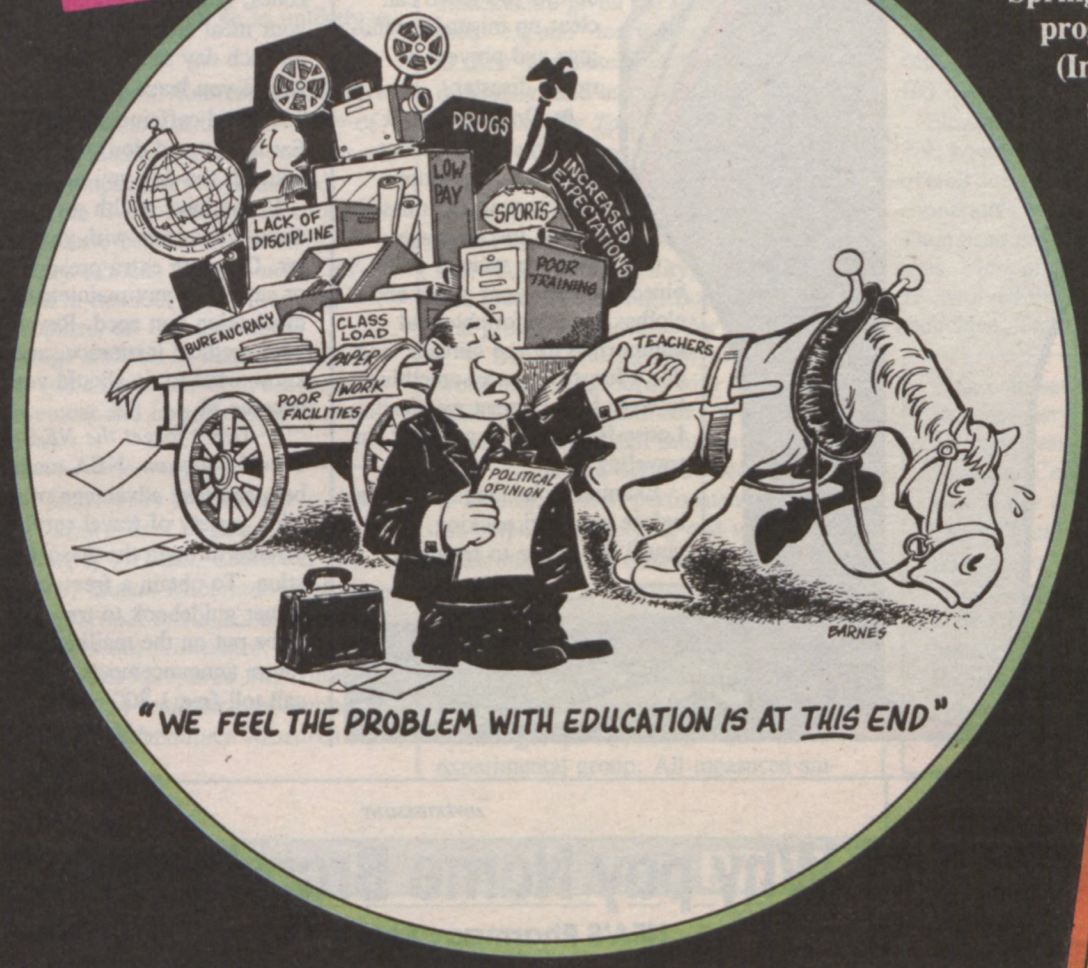
"Thank you."

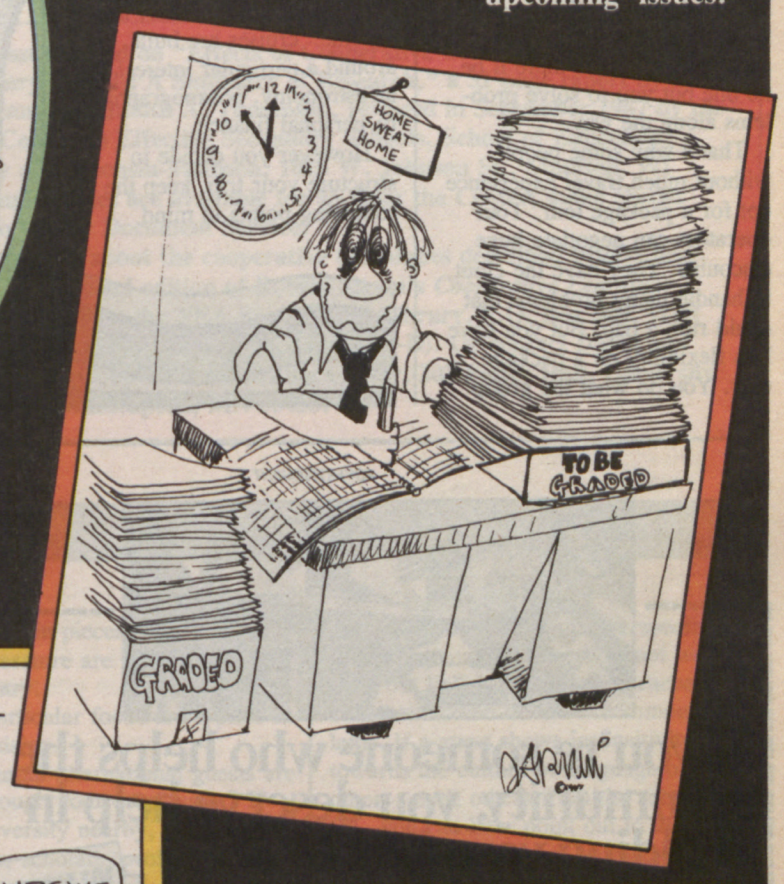
THE LIGHTER SIDE

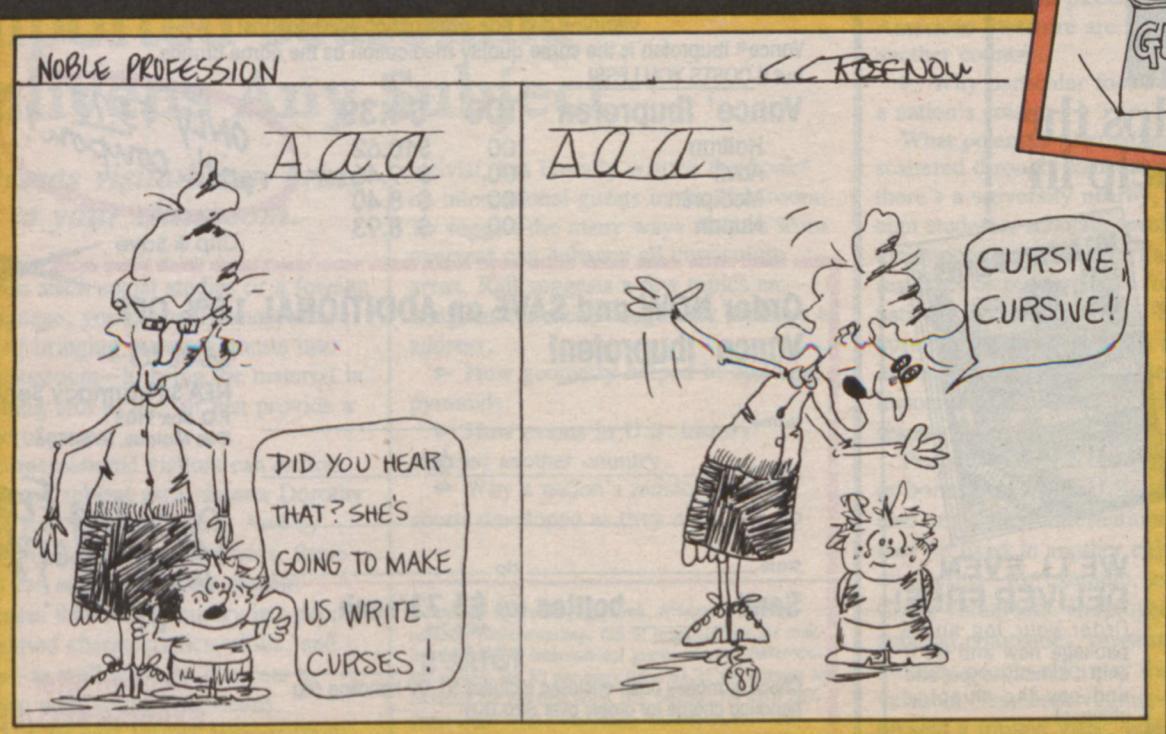
Wacky, Weird, & Whimsical

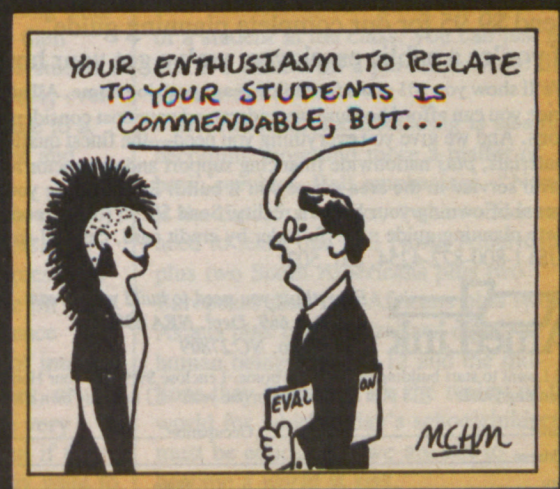
Judging by our recent cartoon competition, NEA's membership includes many talented cartoonists. It wasn't easy, but we've picked the winners. Kudos to (from top) Steve Barrows, an English teacher at U32 High School, East Montpelier, Vt.; John L. Barnes, a cartooning and commercial art teacher at Wenatchee (Wash.) High School; Fred Darpino, an art teacher at Horace Mann Junior High School, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Cathy Rosenow, gifted and talented program coordinator for the Union Township (Ind.) school system; and Jenne Meachum, a first grade teacher in Panama City, Fla. A cartoon by our sixth winner, Kathleen Kosewicz, a junior high art teacher in Allegheny County, Pa., appeared in last month's *NEA Today*. Other cartoons by these six NEA members and several runners-up will be featured in upcoming issues.


I KNOW HOW MUCH CAN BE FORGOTTEN OVER THE SUMMER AND SO, LET'S BEGIN FROM THE BEGINNING... THIS IS PAPER... THIS IS A PENCIL.. REPEAT AFTER ME PLEASE...
IS THIS GONNA BE ON A TEST?. DO I HAVE TO DO THIS TOO?.. I ALREADY KNOW THIS.. I DID THIS LAST YEAR.. DO I HAVE TO DO THIS AGAIN, IF I DID THIS LAST YEAR?.. CAN WE GO OUTSIDE?.. I'M NOT USED TO ALL THIS SHADE.. I'M TIRED.. CAN I GO HOME NOW?.
THE LAW SAYS YOU CAN'T GIVE HOMEWORK IN THE FIRST WEEK YOU'LL CAUSE A TRAUMA...
STEVE BARROWS









YOU AND YOUR RETIREMENT

Is There Travel in Your Future?

Which age group gives travel agents and tour operators the most business? Carefree singles? Jet-setters? Wrong. It's globe-trotting retirees.

Most retirees and those nearing retirement find themselves in ideal circumstances to take advantage of travel opportunities. Their children are grown, their earnings have reached their peak, and they have more free time than ever before.

What about you? Are travel plans foremost in your mind? If so, read on.

There are three major ways to plan a trip. One is to make individual arrangements—yourself or through a travel agent. This means you plan your own custom tour, arranging transportation, lodging, meals, and entertainment. There are advantages to this approach, especially for independent types with strong likes and dislikes and travelers who want to experience the local culture firsthand, without a tour guide.

But there are disadvantages as well. You may find à la carte travel expensive, especially with the falling dollar. It takes a lot of time and work to make and confirm your arrangements. And there'll be no one but you to solve problems along the way.

That's why some people without much travel experience opt for a package tour. Tour operators can negotiate huge discounts. They have the clout to handle many problems that could ruin a trip. But you have less flexibility on a package tour. You do what the group does much of the time.

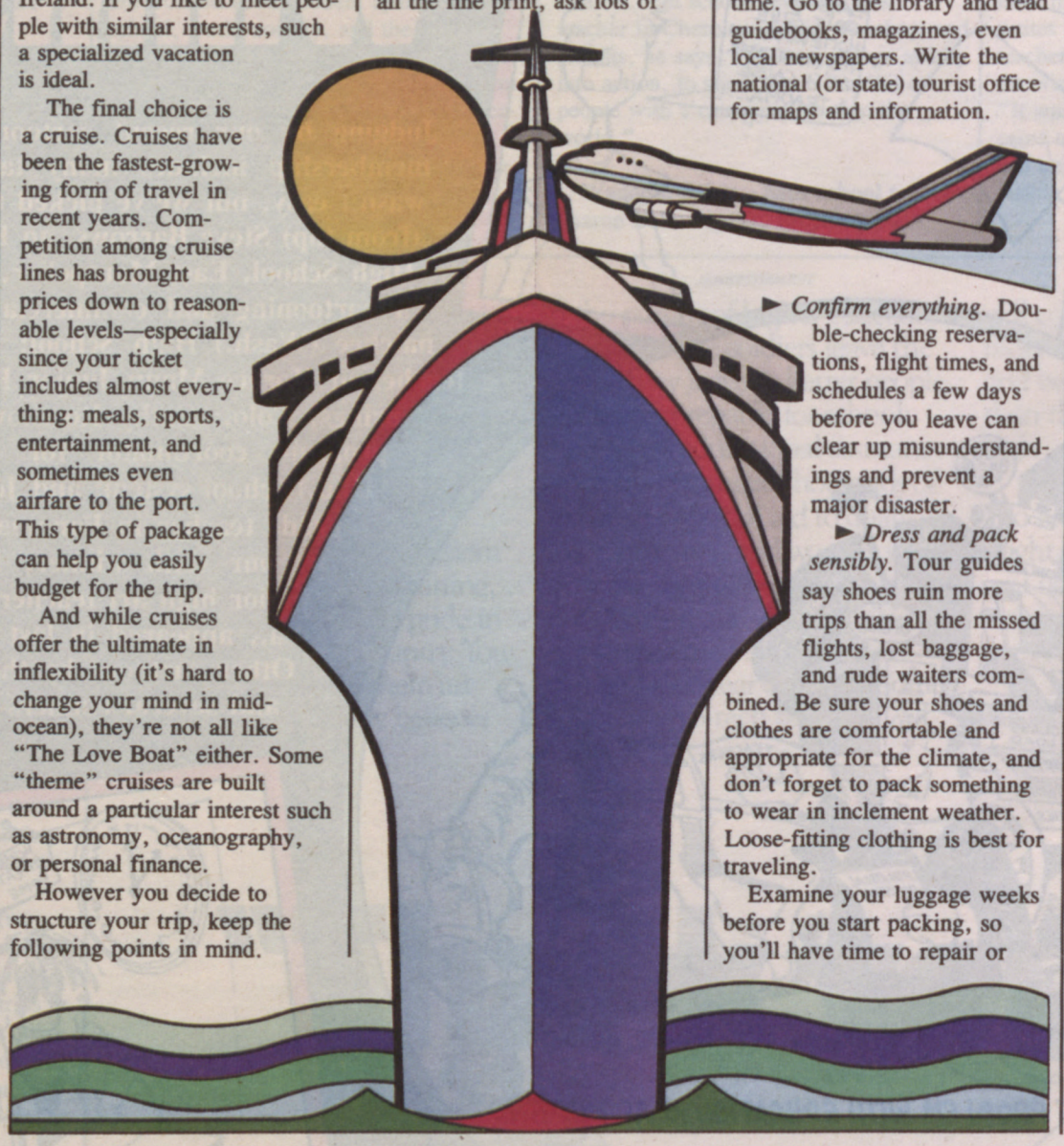
Fortunately, there's a wide variety of tours from which to choose—from the notorious six-countries-in-seven-days dash to very specialized trips like a wine lover's tour of Bordeaux or a bicycle excursion through Ireland. If you like to meet people with similar interests, such a specialized vacation is ideal.

The final choice is a cruise. Cruises have been the fastest-growing form of travel in recent years. Competition among cruise lines has brought prices down to reasonable levels—especially since your ticket includes almost everything: meals, sports, entertainment, and sometimes even airfare to the port. This type of package can help you easily budget for the trip.

And while cruises offer the ultimate in inflexibility (it's hard to change your mind in mid-ocean), they're not all like "The Love Boat" either. Some "theme" cruises are built around a particular interest such as astronomy, oceanography, or personal finance.

However you decide to structure your trip, keep the following points in mind.

► *Shop around.* No other industry has as many bargains—and rip-offs—as travel. Start early, and don't just compare prices. A cheap hotel 20 miles from the city is no bargain if you have to spend time and money commuting. Read all the fine print, ask lots of questions, and don't assume anything is included unless you have it in writing.



► *Plan your activities before you leave.* Don't waste precious vacation time planning in your hotel room. Know what you want to do and see ahead of time. Go to the library and read guidebooks, magazines, even local newspapers. Write the national (or state) tourist office for maps and information.

► *Confirm everything.* Double-checking reservations, flight times, and schedules a few days before you leave can clear up misunderstandings and prevent a major disaster.

► *Dress and pack sensibly.* Tour guides say shoes ruin more trips than all the missed flights, lost baggage, and rude waiters combined. Be sure your shoes and clothes are comfortable and appropriate for the climate, and don't forget to pack something to wear in inclement weather. Loose-fitting clothing is best for traveling.

Examine your luggage weeks before you start packing, so you'll have time to repair or replace any damaged pieces. Consider how often you'll have to carry your luggage before you decide what to take. A huge suitcase may fit on a cruise, but not a bus tour.

► *Don't wear yourself out.* Too many people come back from a trip needing a vacation. You don't have to be doing something every waking minute. Relax in a park or cafe occasionally.

If your trip will involve physical activity such as walking or biking, start a mild exercise program a few weeks before you leave. And don't run last-minute errands right before you go. You don't want to arrive at your destination stressed and worn out.

If you're crossing time zones, reduce jet lag by shifting your meal and rest time a little bit each day starting a week before you leave. Avoid alcohol and caffeine on the plane. Eat lightly and don't overexert yourself the day you arrive.

If you have health problems, discuss your trip with your doctor. Carry an extra prescription or supply of any maintenance medication you need. Review your medical insurance, and know what to do should you become ill.

► *Don't forget the NEA Travel Program.* NEA members can take advantage of a wide variety of travel services offered through the Association. To obtain a free consumer guidebook to travel and to be put on the mailing list for future announcements, simply call toll-free 1-800-637-4636.

—Marian Clayton

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RESEARCH CLUES

Cooperative Learning: Can It Work Beyond Elementary Grades?

Joe Di Dio

Cooperative learning strategies, popular in the lower grades, earn "mixed" marks at the high school level, education researchers say.

by Robert McNergney and Martin Haberman

If you haven't read or heard recently about ways of teaching students to learn cooperatively, better check your pulse. Articles in professional and popular journals, symposia and workshops, editorials and op ed pieces in newspapers, radio interviews with researchers, and lots of teacher lounge talk have made *cooperation*, not *competition*, the watchword in professional circles.

To date, researchers have devoted most of their attention to cooperative learning in the elementary grades. But a new synthesis of the research suggests that getting students to work together in high schools might not be as unlikely as some believe.

At the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fred Newmann and Judith Thompson have synthesized research on five techniques of cooperation that have been investigated in secondary schools. Despite major differences in methods and underlying philosophies, all five techniques encourage students to help each other learn, and all promote both academic achievement and improvement of social relations.

Robert McNergney is associate professor at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903; Martin Haberman is professor at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53201. They prepared this column for NEA Today *with the cooperation of the American Educational Research Association.*

The five approaches were—

► *Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD).* The teacher presents a lesson, then student teams work on assignments. Individual scores are based on improvement over previous scores, and team performances are recognized.

► *Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT).* This technique is similar to STAD, but students compete with classmates of similar achievement from other teams to earn points for their own team.

► *Jigsaw (JIG).* Students are assigned to teams. Each person possesses unique information, and expert groups are formed across teams to master material and present it to other team members. Or, in a variation ("Jigsaw II"), all the students are given the same information, then "experts" teach more specific topics to their teammates. Tests are taken individually, and team scores publicized.

► *Learning Together (LT).* Small groups work to produce products. Teachers encourage positive interdependence (the idea that the group sinks or swims together), face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing. Both individuals and groups get rewards for performance.

► *Group Investigation (GI).* Students work in small groups, with each group taking on a different task. Within groups students decide what information they need and how to organize and present it. In evaluating their performances, teachers emphasize applying and synthesizing ideas and making inferences.

The Wisconsin researchers selected 27 studies of these approaches in grades 7-12. Each study was chosen for its high methodological quality. All included control groups to compare with the experimental group. All measured students' academic achievement at the end of the project. The studies dealt with classes in subjects ranging from math and science to language arts and social studies.

Overall, in 68 percent of the studies, cooperative learning was found to be more successful in terms of academic achievement than the techniques to which it was compared (with success defined by students' academic achievement). STAD had the largest number of comparisons and the highest percentage of success (89 percent). Ranking next were TGT (75 percent), LT (73 percent), and GI (67 percent). By contrast, JIG had only a 17 percent success rate.

Eliminating studies done in grades 7-9, however, resulted in a much lower overall success rate—just 33 percent—for cooperative techniques. Newmann and Thompson suggest several possible reasons. Most of the studies in grades 10-12 involved the less successful JIG technique. Teachers of grades 10-12 may be less familiar with the cooperative techniques and feel uneasy using them. Or older students may prefer being taught by a knowledgeable teacher over "wasting time" teaching their peers and learning from them.

It's important to note that even the most successful cooperative strategies may not be for everybody. Some of the studies Newmann and Thompson looked at suggest that when students were matched to their preferred learning method—cooperative or competitive—they outperformed those who were mismatched.

Especially in grades 10-12, the two researchers conclude, successful application of cooperative approaches will likely require "significant teacher preparation on how to reorient high school students to new classroom procedures," as well as teaching students "specific cooperative skills." □

This column is based on "Effects of Cooperative Learning on Achievement in Secondary Schools: A Summary of Research," a 31-page report by Fred M. Newmann and Judith A. Thompson, released in September 1987 by the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53706. Single copies are available for $5 from the Center; make checks payable to Center Document Service.

To learn more about the cooperative techniques described briefly here, order the new second edition of Robert Slavin's *Cooperative Learning: Student Teams*, from the NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516 ($2.95, stock no. 1074-4-00-D). Or contact David and Roger Johnson, Cooperative Learning Center, 202 Pattee Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455. □

INTERNATIONAL

Imported Seasoning Enlivens Any Subject

Overseas visitors can bring zest to your classroom.

If you teach social studies or a foreign language, you probably know the value of bringing overseas guests into your classroom—to bring the material in a teaching unit to life, or just provide a change of pace.

But international visitors can enrich almost any subject area, asserts Dorothy Rall of East Lansing, Mich. And by destroying stereotypes, she adds, these guests can add even more: student awareness that every country has people with varied characteristics, skills, and talents—as well as some interests in common with young Americans.

Rall, a 30-year history teacher (now retired) and continuing Association activist, has literally written the book* on international guests in the classroom. To suggest the many ways visitors from overseas can enhance all curriculum areas, Rall suggests a few topics an imaginative teacher might ask a visitor to address:

► How geometry helped in building pyramids.

► How events in U.S. history affected another country.

► Why a nation's music, art, or sports developed as they did.

► Why certain pieces of English and American literature are popular in another country.

► Why particular foods are typical in a nation's cuisine.

What potential international guests are scattered through your community? If there's a university nearby, consider foreign students, scholars, professors, or their spouses. Don't overlook long-time residents or their visitors from their native countries. You may have students born overseas in your own school, even in your class, who can contribute to a lesson—and can gain confidence and respect by doing so.

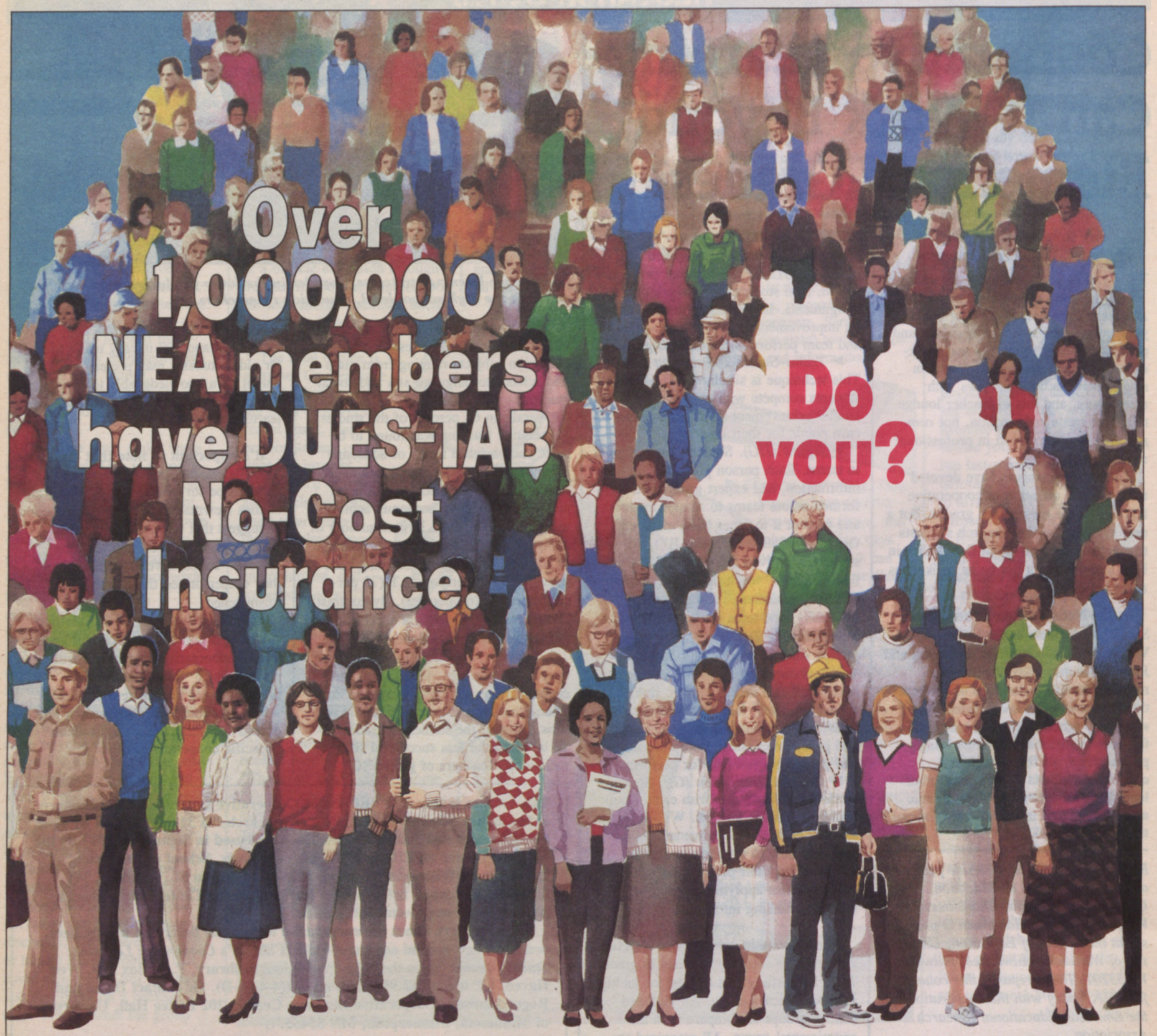
People who were born in this country, or born overseas of U.S. parents, can also qualify as "international guests" if they've lived in another culture on its own terms—for example, as Peace Corps volunteers. Employees of international companies, missionaries, or military people also may make very valuable classroom visitors—but if they present a limited view, you may want to seek out speeches, books, or films that will give students another perspective.

Inviting overseas guests is not without risk, but Rall has found that teachers can easily overcome the most common problems. If a guest shows insensitivity towards the culture or language of others—even others from the same country—you can later point out to the class that this is a traditional attitude but is now obsolete. If that guest is the parent of a student in the class, you can just say that it's wonderful a parent took the time to visit the class.

International understanding is steadily becoming more and more a matter of basic survival, Rall emphasizes. "Now is the time," she says, "when children need to learn that two North Americans plus two South Americans plus two Europeans plus two Africans plus two Asians plus two Australians equal 12 human beings. Those 12 and the millions they represent are the reality of the world for which today's schoolchildren must be educated if we are not to become a *world* at risk."

—Jane Power

* Dorothy Rall's 40-page book, *Bridges to International Understanding*, full of practical tips for making the most of international guests in your classroom, is available for $3 per copy (plus $1.25 for postage and handling for the first copy, 50¢ postage for each additional copy) from Community Volunteers for International Programs, 101A International Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824.



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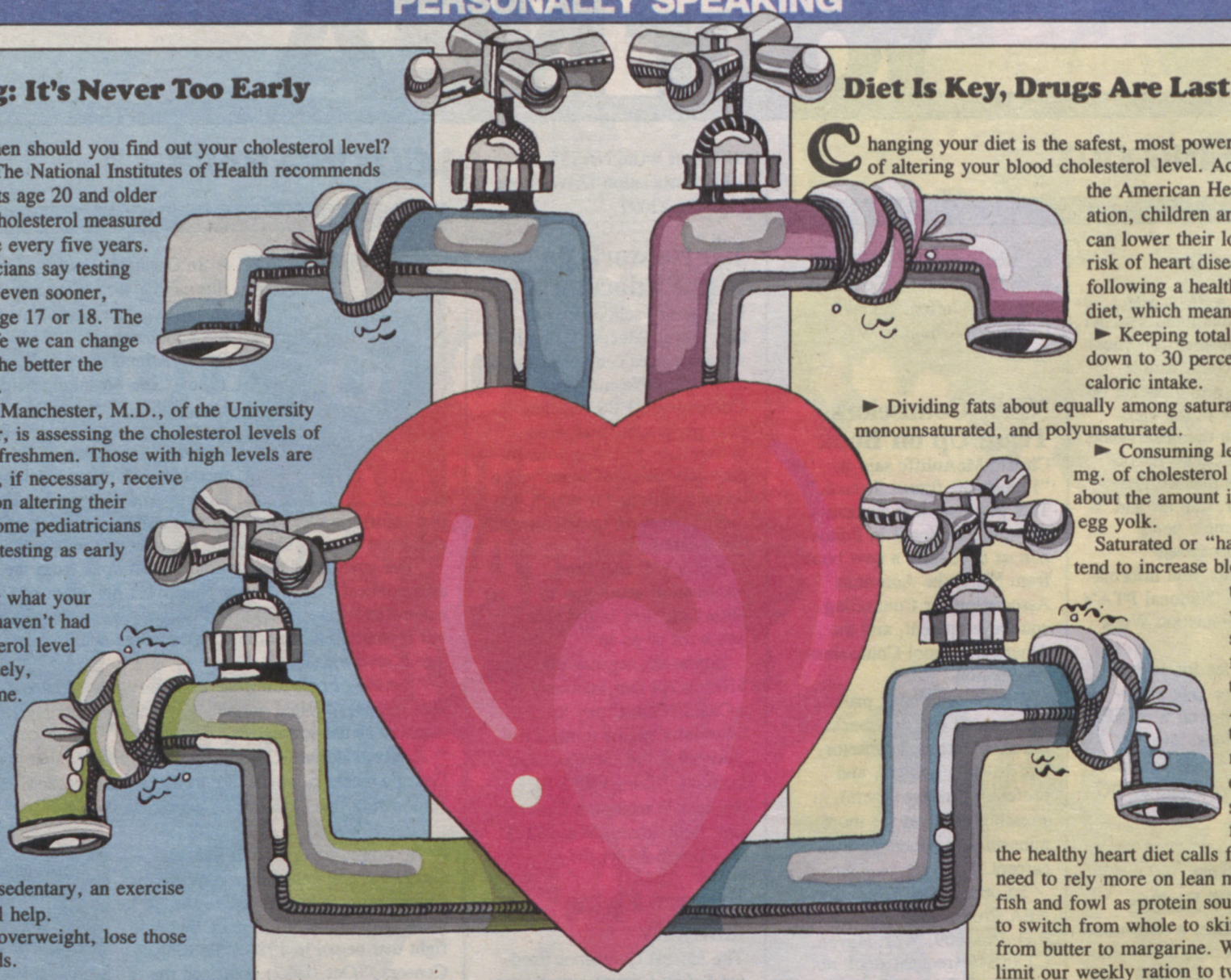

CHOLESTEROL

The Controllable Heart Attack Risk

If you're an American, there's a seven in 10 chance that you'll eventually die with atherosclerotic plaque in your arteries. There's a one in two chance that plaque will have contributed to your death by heart attack or stroke.

That's the bad news. The good news is that you can control the primary factors that place you at risk for cardiovascular disease—smoking, hypertension, and high cholesterol level—by altering your lifestyle and, in certain cases, taking medication.

A 1987 report from the National Cholesterol Education Program of the National Institutes of Health sheds new light on the detection, evaluation, and treatment of high cholesterol levels in adults. The report offers cholesterol control guidelines and other resources that can help NEA members enhance their own health and educate their students.

What is cholesterol? It's a fatty (lipid) substance, essential to life, that we all carry in our blood. Our bodies need cholesterol to manufacture bile and many vital hormones.

We eat cholesterol in animal foods such as chicken or steak. Our livers also produce cholesterol from fat we eat. We may increase this production by eating large amounts of animal or vegetable fat.

As we age, we tend to build up deposits called plaque on our arterial walls. This process is called atherosclerosis. One component of plaque is cholesterol. As plaque collects, it narrows the channels through which blood passes, decreasing the flow of nutrients, especially oxygen, to vital organs such as the heart and brain. If an artery becomes totally blocked by a clot or a broken-off bit of plaque, a heart attack or stroke can result.

Not all cholesterol is alike. Cholesterol can actually be either "good" or "bad." Our blood carries cholesterol as a component of molecules called lipoproteins. HDL (high density lipoproteins) carries cholesterol from the walls of blood vessels, where it can create problems, back to the liver. That's why it's called "good" cholesterol. LDL (low density lipoprotein) carries cholesterol from the liver to the walls of blood vessels—hence its reputation as "bad" cholesterol.

So it's important to know not only your blood cholesterol level, but also the ratio of HDL to LDL. The higher your HDL level—with a corresponding lowering of your LDL level—the better.

How low should your cholesterol level be? Over the years, every time some major health organization has offered new guidelines, it's lowered the recommended level. The latest guidelines, from the National Cholesterol Education Program, classify cholesterol levels below 200 mg. as "desirable," those between 200 and 239 mg. as "borderline high," and those 240 mg. and above as "high."

Testing: It's Never Too Early

When should you find out your cholesterol level? The National Institutes of Health recommends that all adults age 20 and older have their cholesterol measured at least once every five years. Some physicians say testing should start even sooner, perhaps at age 17 or 18. The earlier in life we can change our habits, the better the success rate.

Ralph A. Manchester, M.D., of the University of Rochester, is assessing the cholesterol levels of all entering freshmen. Those with high levels are retested and, if necessary, receive counseling on altering their lifestyles. Some pediatricians recommend testing as early as infancy.

No matter what your age, if you haven't had your cholesterol level measured lately, now's the time. If your level is above "desirable," take action immediately.

► If you smoke, stop.

► If you're sedentary, an exercise program will help.

► If you're overweight, lose those excess pounds.

Diet Is Key, Drugs Are Last Resort

Changing your diet is the safest, most powerful means of altering your blood cholesterol level. According to the American Heart Association, children and adults can lower their long-term risk of heart disease by following a healthy heart diet, which means—

► Keeping total fat intake down to 30 percent of your caloric intake.

► Dividing fats about equally among saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated.

► Consuming less than 300 mg. of cholesterol daily—about the amount in one large egg yolk.

Saturated or "hard" fats tend to increase blood cholesterol levels, while unsaturated fats lower them. Americans tend to eat more fat—especially saturated fat—than the healthy heart diet calls for. We need to rely more on lean meat and fish and fowl as protein sources—and to switch from whole to skim milk, from butter to margarine. We need to limit our weekly ration to two eggs, two or three servings of red meat, and three or four servings of cheese.

These changes aren't painful. If you make them, you'll see measurable improvement in your cholesterol level within a month, plus further improvement within a few more months.

If you need to decrease your cholesterol level even more, your next steps should be to restrict saturated fats to less than 7 percent of the total fat calories you consume and cut your daily cholesterol intake to under 200 mg.

Cholesterol-reducing drugs—bile acid-binding resins, nicotinic acid, fibric acids, or probucol—should be used only after trying the most rigorous diet modification. Even then, diet therapy should continue hand in hand with medication.

Most of the drugs that lower blood cholesterol levels have problems—they taste awful, cost a lot, or cause unpleasant side effects. One gaining wide acceptance is probucol, which lowers LDL and HDL cholesterol levels by 10 to 20 percent.

The newest cholesterol-lowering drug is lovastatin—an enzyme inhibitor that interferes with the body's synthesis of cholesterol at a very early step in the process. NIH's National Cholesterol Education Program has declined to put lovastatin among the "first choice" drugs because its long-term safety has yet to be established. The manufacturer recommends that users have liver function tests every four to six weeks for the first 15 months, as well as an eye test.

Is your favorite food high or low in cholesterol?

Fruits, grains, vegetables	0 mg. LOW
Scallops (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	53 mg.
Oysters (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	45 mg.
Clams (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	65 mg.
Fish, lean (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	65 mg.
Chicken/turkey, light meat (without skin) (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	80 mg.
Lobster (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	85 mg.
Beef, lean (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	90 mg.
Chicken/turkey, dark meat (without skin) (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	95 mg.
Crab (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	100 mg.
Shrimp (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	150 mg.
Egg yolk, one	270 mg.
Beef liver (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	440 mg.
Beef kidney (cooked, about 3½ oz.)	700 mg. HIGH

To Learn More...

Single copies of the following materials may be ordered free from the National Cholesterol Education Program/NIH, Building 31, Room 4A21, Bethesda, MD 20892. Items starred are particularly suitable for classroom use.

So You Have High Blood Cholesterol.... Explains cholesterol control in depth. 26 pp.

**Eaters' Almanac*. Helps food shoppers make wise choices. 36 pp.

**Facts About...Blood Cholesterol*. Explains the cholesterol/heart disease connection and dietary recommendations. 3 pp.

**Test Your Healthy Heart IQ*. Gives a quiz—with answers. 1 p.

The following literature is available from the American Heart Association, 7320 Greenville Ave., Dallas, TX 75240, or from your local Heart Association.

Cholesterol and Your Heart, *An Eating Plan for Healthy Adults*, and *1987 Heart Facts*. Single copies free.

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BOOK BEAT

Learning Disability: Some Second Thoughts

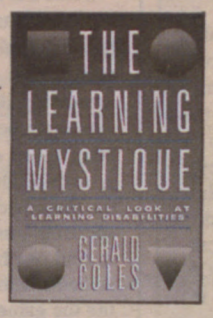
The Learning Mystique will bring relief and joy to the hearts of many teachers who have wondered for years what they were doing wrong. It will also infuriate the entire learning disabilities establishment.

Its author, Gerald Coles, won't mind. From the first chapter, where he refers to the "alleged identification" of dyslexia and "presumed" minimal brain dysfunction, Coles looks skeptically at the learning disabilities field.

Coles, who's a professor of clinical psychiatry at Robert Wood Johnson (formerly Rutgers) Medical School in New Jersey, attempts to show that the research underlying the identification and treatment of learning disabled American children simply doesn't support the claims made by LD specialists.

Systematically and comprehensively, Coles reviews the research on all aspects of learning disabilities—deficits in perception, memory, attention, and language development; experiments with

THE LEARNING MYSTIQUE: A CRITICAL LOOK AT "LEARNING DISABILITIES"



by Gerald Coles

(Pantheon. 330 pages. $22.95.)

such diagnostic technologies as neurometrics (computer analysis of EEG data) and CAT scans; and drug therapy.

His conclusion: "The emergence of the LD field...and the way in which children have been diagnosed as learning disabled. . . have not been the result of a scientific breakthrough."

Time after time Coles highlights the circular reasoning researchers have used to confirm the existence of learning disabilities, as in his reaction to the results of neurometric studies.

"We have seen this logic before," Coles writes. "How do we know this potentially heterogeneous group was 'organically impaired'? Because the neurometric analysis determined this. How do we know the analysis was correct? Because neurometric analysis can diagnose organic impairment. How do we know the group was learning disabled? Because the learning disabled have organic impairments and neurometrics can diagnose them." And so on.

Tracing the rise of the LD establishment, Coles gives a fascinating account of the recent history of the American family. Elements of the affluent society and suburbia myths, he suggests, played a major role in the emergence of a biological explanation for learning disabilities. How could the middle-class American child possibly have trouble learning, unless his or her problem was "biological"?

But Coles argues that "middle-class children's learning disabilities were not some kind of [biological] 'fluke,' as LD specialists have often concluded; rather, they were part of a larger failure of U.S. middle-class life to achieve post-World War II promises and expectations."

After seven chapters of documentation, with devastating quotations in the jargon-loaded language of the LD literature, Coles presents his own ideas about how to understand the failure of most LD-labeled children to learn as expected. According to his "interactivity" theory, the usual LD theory excludes certain factors—classroom and family interactions and other "social phenomena"—that an explanatory theory must take into account.

Coles believes the child with learning difficulties is not very likely to have a brain abnormality. Rather, that child should be seen as a whole person with a particular history, which probably includes some emotional problems and ineffective teaching in the past or present. (Classroom teachers could be doing some things better, Coles thinks.)

Children show a range of neurological differences, *not* abnormalities, that interact with their own social circumstances—experiences with parents, teachers, schools. Depending on the quality of that interaction, they either learn or fail to learn.

In the nature/nurture argument, the LD professionals come down on the side of nature, Coles thinks. They hold that there is something wrong with the child only, not with the family, school, and social environments in which that child lives and learns. Coles believes the LD "establishment" has failed to make its case.

Citing other studies, he says it's time to move on to other theories. The evidence is substantial enough, Coles thinks, "to support the use of the interactivity theory as a working model for understanding children's learning difficulties."

In *The Learning Mystique* Coles summarizes the 90-year history of "learning disabilities" as a field of study and practice. He begins with the findings of James Hinshelwood, the Scottish ophthalmologist who first identified "word-blindness" in 1895, continues on to the work of the 20th-century American neurologist Samuel Orton, and brings readers up to date with discussion of the stimulant drug Ritalin and studies of the Feingold diet in 1984. Each section is extensively footnoted, and there are as many superb explanatory footnotes as there are mere citations.

This is a thought-provoking and scholarly work, inviting educators to take a sophisticated and careful look at what learning disabilities are and are not—and to consider whether learning disabilities are in fact an educational house built on sand.

Reviewed by Katie Johnson, first grade teacher, Bowdoin (Maine) Central School; member, Merrymeeting Education Association; and author of Doing Words *(Houghton Mifflin, 1987).*

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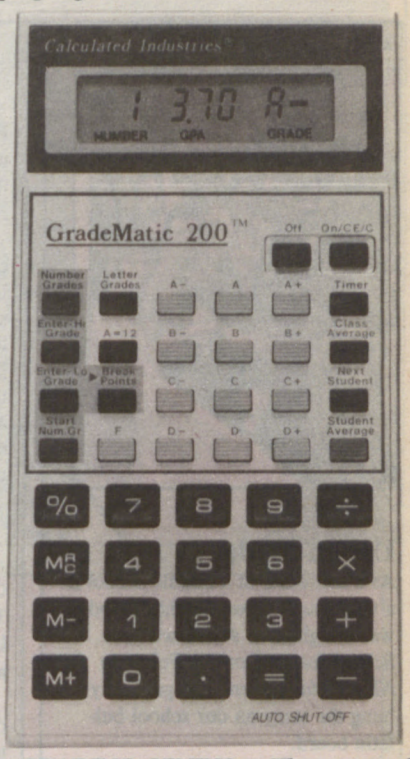

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Letters

Urban Pride

As a counselor at a middle school in a very tough urban neighborhood, I was delighted to see Hawthorne School featured on the February *NEA Today* cover—and promptly hung the story on our school bulletin board.

Several of our teachers have commented that this feature gave them new inspiration for the daily battle. It's great to see that some of the same approaches we're trying here really *can* work—and to know that when an urban school brings itself up from "the pits," it merits national recognition.

Yvonne Ball
San Francisco, California

Alcoholics' Children

Thank you for the informative and timely article "Children of Alcoholics" (Dec.). Given the prevalence of alcoholism and other drug addictions, it is important that educators address this issue in their classrooms. Both children of alcoholics and the rest of the population need education and support concerning substances and substance abuse.

Unfortunately, the story focused mainly on the high school and junior high school age bracket. This education must start at the primary and *preschool* level when most children are already forming their understanding about substance use. Children are not "too young to understand" what is already seriously affecting their lives. Educators of all grade levels need to be willing to listen to children, to be open to their concerns, and to say, "I'm so glad you asked."

Please add to your resource list "I'm So Glad You Asked," Inc., Box 329, Amherst, MA 01004, 413-549-3873, for curriculum materials and training for preschool/kindergarten teachers.

Marguerite Sheehan
Patricia Newell
Amherst, Massachusetts

Stopping Drug Abuse

In response to Gary Parnham's article "We Can Stop Student Drug Abuse" (Sounding Board, Dec.), there is a world of difference between *preventing* student substance abuse and *stopping* substance abuse. That difference is professional credentialing.

Substance-abusing teens need medical health care by professionals licensed in this field, while at-risk students need qualified educators (such as Mr. Parnham) to deliver a quality prevention curriculum.

Throughout his piece, Parnham mentions concerned citizens, school administrators, peer helpers, teachers, and school boards. Where are the physicians, chemical dependency counselors, and mental health professionals in his program?

Without a professional partnership between educators and substance abuse professionals, our current adolescent epidemic of chemical impairment will continue.

David D. Moore
Tacoma, Washington

The "Sounding Board" article on drug abuse was very informative. Why can't we learn from our mistakes and get to the heart of the trouble in sex education?

A goal stated in NEA publications is that "by the time students achieve maturity and leave high school, they should possess basic understanding of virtually every aspect of sexuality." How many years will it take to realize that information alone solves no problems?

Now is the time to teach the students self-restraint and how to say no! It took 20 years for drug education to wake up and promote the "No" standard. Let's not wait another 20 years for sex education to realize that abstinence is okay. Must the statistics of teen pregnancy, abortion, and AIDS take their toll on these "informed" but misguided students?

Morality and self-control have always been positive attributes in society. Let's encourage our students to be responsible citizens. They should show respect and concern for others, not just seek after self-gratification.

Mary McKinney
Oak Harbor, Washington

Playing the Game

The December "People" page included an item concerning the record number of wins by the Sanderson High School soccer team in Raleigh, N.C. It pointed out that the players continue to play the sport year-round.

I was not impressed by the record. I was even less impressed by *NEA Today*'s giving coverage to such a topic. One cannot help wondering if the students involved would not be better off playing other sports or engaging in other growth-producing activities during the remainder of the year and spending less time on one sport.

And one has to wonder if some students who could benefit by playing the game are being slighted in favor of those who produce such records. If this should be the case, should not the NEA be concerned about it?

Ralph D. Maves
Roseville, Minnesota

Policies, Not Pols

Organizations such as ours can accomplish more by supporting policies rather than politicians. In our county we are represented by one Republican and one Democrat at the state level. Both support our policies. We never have a partisan defeat. We don't make any political enemies for public education—just friends.

Merrill R. Convis
San Rafael, California

Helping Teach Health

The National Association of Teachers of Comprehensive Health Education (NATCHE) has free overhead transparency masters—23 dealing with chemical dependency and 12 dealing with sexually transmitted diseases—for secondary level classroom teachers of health education.

NATCHE is attempting to link up with health teachers to learn what their teaching needs are and how to meet those needs.

For further information and the free materials, write NATCHE, 6020 Miles Avenue, Huntington Park, CA 90255 or, from outside California, call toll-free 1-800-9NATCHE between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. Pacific time.

Ric Loya
Huntington Park, California

Address correspondence to "Letters," NEA Today, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Issues '88: A Potpourri of Reader Reactions

Praise the Lord! Once a year NEA makes a bow to education, giving the lie to Secretary Bennett's snide remarks.

Your January issue was the finest yet of these annual special issues, which I keep in my library as a welcome relief from 11 months of dreary union propaganda. I stayed up late last night to read this issue and went to bed assured that there are at least some educators still alive. It was a masterpiece.

Robert Orr
Mt. Carmel, Illinois

Congratulations on *Issues '88*. The articles are excellent and at a level worthy of teachers' attention.

In the past I have been either dismayed or embarrassed by the topics or the treatment of them. This issue made me proud to be an NEA member. Please keep up this level of publication.

Merry Jo Bauer
Ithaca, New York

I commend the effort you put into *Issues '88*, especially Texas State Sen. Carl Parker's article, "Legislating Reform: The Texas Experience."

After being blackballed by the Houston Independent School District for leveling with a state auditor last spring about conditions in the Houston system and grieving two matters to the school board, I've been seeking a teaching position elsewhere.

I've discovered I could not renew my Georgia certificate without first traveling 800 miles to take Georgia's teacher certification test—an annoying fact after having suffered through the fiasco of the Texas teacher test.

I believe that after we have gone through the present fad of teacher testing, we will come around to teacher accountability, measured not by subjective, often politically oriented administrator observations, but by the product of our efforts— the gains students have made in their scores. Like it or not, in the absence of other more objective data, student achievement is a commonsense criterion the public uses to judge schools.

Roy T. Quick III
Houston, Texas

Issues '88 was outstanding. So many terrific ideas; wonderful philosophies. Oh, if we could only implement some of those ideals.

Kathy Nyholm
Los Angeles, California

Congratulations! Wow, what a terrific piece of work is *Issues '88*! I have read most of the articles and have found each one saying something exciting, challenging, and that I have been moving towards over the years as a teacher of remedial students.

I can hardly believe that *NEA Today* has done this. I oppose the confrontational method of union operation and have never felt I received full value from my dues. I have wished that NEA would lead reform, rather than fight it.

You have almost restored my faith in this organization. Maybe we can go beyond the status quo!

Virginia Mock
Macomb, Illinois

Issues '88 typifies the problem of education. Of the 13 authors, apparently none was currently or recently employed as a teacher in a public school. As a classroom teacher, I am outraged to find that the national organization purporting to represent me is a major contributor to the notion that education professionals are a separate select group, not to be confused with classroom teachers.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that professional educators wish to separate themselves from classroom teachers. There appears to be little prestige in being a classroom teacher. When expert opinions are sought, invariably the expert is either someone who has worked his or her way "up" (out of the stultifying quagmire of teaching, perhaps?) or some other person whose claim to be an educator is based on observing, studying, evaluating, or some gerund other than teaching.

Jeff LeMieux
Oak Harbor, Washington

"The Challenge To Make Good Schools Great," the *Issues '88* essay by Dennis Littky and Robby Fried, should be titled "The Challenge To Make Mediocre Schools Great." The article only demeans schools, points out mediocrity both in educational and administrative practices, and refers to teachers and principals as the "enemy."

I would like to know how many kids at Littky's high school score well on the SATs. How many belong to the National Honor Society? How many go on to college? What is your record, Thayer High School?

Has your approach been created for a school's greatness, or is it a rationale created for coping with an unsuccessful school destined for low achievement and mediocrity?

William R. Brendel
Northvale, New Jersey

In his *Issues '88* article "Cultural Literacy: Let's Get Specific," E.D. Hirsch, Jr., takes no position on methods of initial reading instruction, suggesting that he assumes most children have mastered the skill of decoding.

On the contrary, it is becoming increasingly clear that poor word recognition skills are preventing many children from acquiring the other reading skills essential to the development of cultural literacy.

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of American children are taught to read by reading outlines of words as if they were Chinese ideographs. This method is popularly known as the whole-word method or sight method. Young children will have trouble learning to read or spell if they are encouraged to concentrate on the size and shape of words. They will then begin the dangerous practice of word guessing. Moreover, the restrictive vocabulary of the whole-word basal reading systems stunts intellectual growth.

By contrast, children who are taught to read by systematic and intensive phonics instruction are prepared to read, by late second or early third grade, the classic and contemporary works of fiction for their age group. Consequently, they develop their "network of information that all competent readers possess."

Louis Krane
Boca Raton, Florida

Just wanted to express my appreciation for the great effort put forth in putting together the January issue of *NEA Today*. I have found several of the articles to be very informative and stimulating. With teachers reading this sort of publication, we *will* improve our education system in America. Thanks again.

Gerald A. Flanagan
Muncie, Indiana

Debate

Should parents be held legally liable for their children's truancy from school?

Joe Di Dio

Carol Du Charme teaches English at DuVal High School in Lanham, Md. She's taught in the county for 16 years and is now a building representative for the Prince Georges County Educators Association. Truancy is a continuing problem in her school system.

YES

Parents are legally and morally responsible for providing their children with the basic necessities of life. If parents don't feed or clothe their children, they're held responsible—and can be charged with child abuse or neglect.

Education is also a basic necessity of life. Public schools offer the children of our nation a free education. Parents should be held legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school.

Maryland law requires that all students attend school regularly until they are 16. In my school district, specific steps have been outlined to ensure compliance with the law. The process is designed to help children—not to penalize parents or make bad home situations worse. Court action is used only as a last resort.

Teachers in this county are required to keep accurate student attendance records. When a student is truant—unlawfully absent—an administrator is notified immediately. Administrators are given some latitude in dealing with truant students so that the individual's needs and personality can be taken into account.

The first time a student is truant, his or her parent or guardian is notified. The student is also provided counseling or other services, and some form of disciplinary action is taken. The discipline takes the form most likely to be effective with that child.

When a student is truant a second time, the parent or guardian is notified of the absence by certified mail, and a conference between the parent, school administrators, and counselor is requested. The purpose of the conference is to understand the problems that led to the truancy and to develop a plan for resolving them. The parent is also advised that continued unlawful absences could result in court action.

If the truancy continues, the school principal refers the case to a pupil personnel worker who makes a further attempt to identify and address the problems underlying the student's absence. In particularly difficult cases, the pupil personnel worker will decide to refer the problem to a court liaison worker or to the Interagency Council on School Attendance.

The Interagency Council consists of representatives of the Board of Education, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Department of Social Services. Most cases referred to the Council have previously come to the attention of one or more of its member agencies, which are in a position to deal not only with the truancy, but with the conditions that brought it about.

The Council continues to work with the family as long as the family cooperates. There is no timetable—no deadline for success.

Unfortunately, sometimes parents do not cooperate. They may give lip service to solving the problems but not follow through. Parents may fail to keep appointments or to return phone calls. In two cases I know of, parents simply said, "This is my child. I don't have to send him to school."

Without the alternative of taking a parent to court, the final outcome in these cases would be a child who's still out of school—a child missing the chance to become a successful adult.

Court action should never be taken lightly. In our program, a lot of time and effort are expended in trying to get children to school without involving the courts. As long as parents or guardians make an honest effort to solve family problems and to provide their children with an education, the county works with them in a supportive capacity. But when all attempts to resolve the problem are exhausted, court proceedings are initiated.

School attendance is not only the law, it's in the best interest of our children. Parents should be held legally responsible for safeguarding that interest.

Jeff Mitchell

Mary Whitney has been a music teacher for 11 years. She currently teaches at the Booker Arts Magnet School in Little Rock, Ark., where she's active in the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association. She's also a member of the National Committee for School Desegregation.

NO

Heaping fines and jail sentences on parents whose children are chronically absent from school may provide some self-righteous gratification. But it's an example of winning the battle only to lose the war.

As educators, our mission is not to punish. It's to educate. Most of us are aware that perpetual absenteeism primarily affects students from families of low socioeconomic status. Often absenteeism or tardiness is a direct result of poverty and its attendant problems.

Why are children kept out of school? It's not always because the parent feels school is unimportant. Rather, the parent may be dealing with short-term survival, even at the expense of the child's long-term economic success.

School-aged children are often kept at home to watch younger children while parents work. In one case in my school, children were absent because they had no shoes. When shoes were provided, the students returned.

Another single parent kept her sixth grader at home to guard the Christmas presents so they wouldn't be stolen. Would a jail sentence really help this situation?

As a single parent, I'm aware of how difficult it can be to cope with the everyday expenses and never-ending "emergencies" of our society. Often we feel like the family in the commercial whose "ship comes in," destroying the front wall and flooding the house. Most of the time, keeping your head above water is the best you can do.

To fine or jail struggling parents would alienate—not educate. Families could justifiably ask whether we really care about their children or merely want to enforce the rules.

I'm not suggesting that we turn our backs and ignore truancy. There's no question that all children need to be in school. I am suggesting that we look to what we know from our classrooms to find positive solutions to absenteeism.

We know that positive reinforcement brings beneficial results. Time and again in the classroom, genuine concern and one-on-one attention result in a turnaround for a failing child.

We need to develop positive, immediate incentives to address truancy, rather than make parents feel that everyone is out to get them, including "those people up at the school."

Sending a parent to jail or imposing a fine may seem like a viable solution, but it's a simplistic approach to a complex problem. It's an approach that ignores the basic need to convince parents of the importance of an education for their children. It's an approach that doesn't begin to deal with the underlying problem of parents who don't trust the educational system.

We must work with parents—not make them feel we're working against them. This is part of the teaching process, like it or not. Pushing the problem into the courts is not the solution. Offering understanding and alternatives to parents whose children are in trouble would develop trust—and do much more to keep the children in school.

Do our society and school systems send conflicting messages when they demand compulsory attendance and then turn around and suspend truant children? Parents could conclude that being in school is considered crucial until children don't attend—and then we no longer want to be bothered with the truant child.

If we truly believe that "all children can learn," we must develop creative strategies based on that premise for dealing with truancy. We must make sure parents understand that their children can receive the education they deserve only if they're in school.

We must work with parents to find solutions to the causes of absenteeism. We must show parents we're on their side in providing children what they need and deserve—quality education. □

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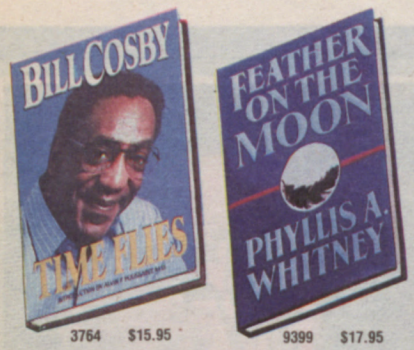

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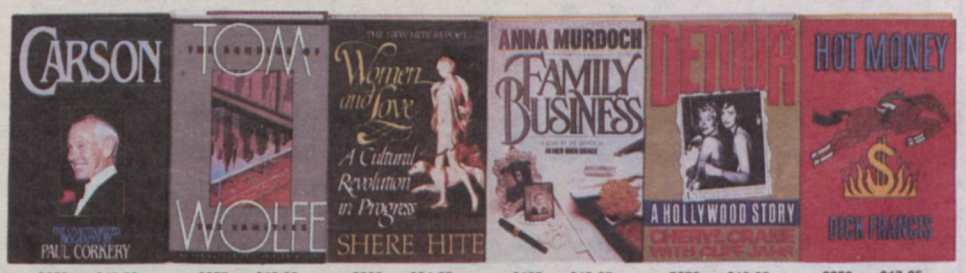

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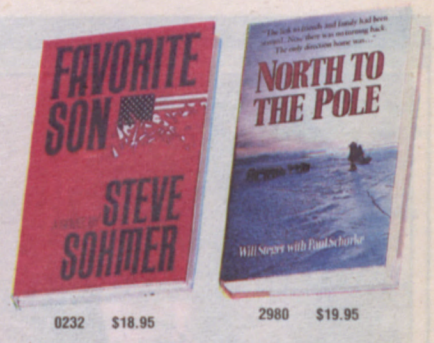

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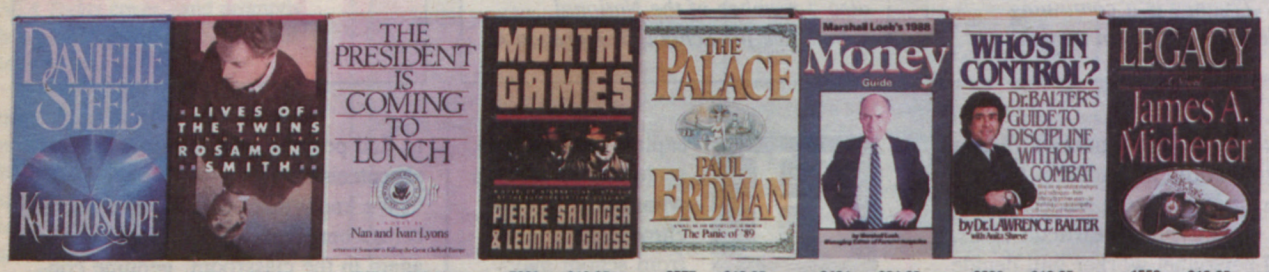

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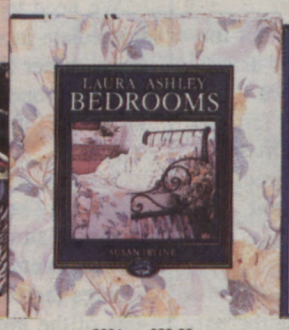

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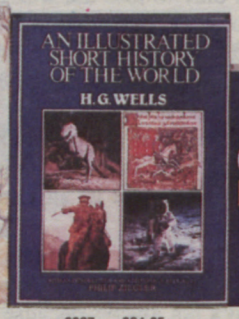

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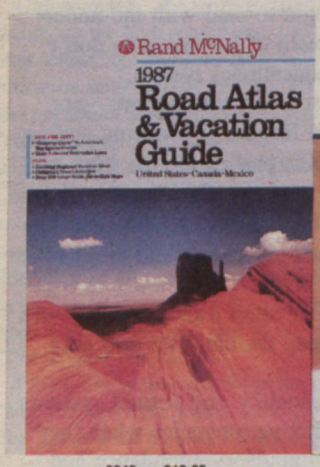

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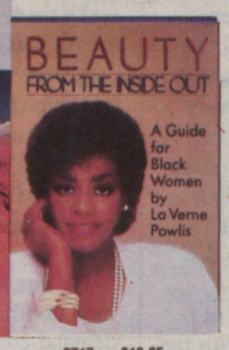

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B. Own condominium or cooperative
C. Own mobile home
D. Own house
E. Live with relatives
F. Other

15. I have been a continuous NEA member since:

A. School year 1981-82 or before
B. School year 1982-83
C. School year 1983-84
D. School year 1984-85
E. School year 1985-86
F. School year 1986-87
G. School year 1987-88

You Must Complete and Return This Certification Form to Activate Your Coverage.
Please complete this form carefully, separate at perforation and mail it back promptly. The information gathered is essential to the underwriting of the DUES-TAB no-cost insurance program. THIS INFORMATION WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE and will not be made available to any organization other than the National Education Association and its affiliates. Your cooperation is appreciated.

PRINT YOUR NUMBERS LIKE THESE SAMPLES

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 :

- Only the "1" goes THROUGH the dots; all others are formed AROUND the dots.
- Use a black fine point pen for best results.
- Keep numbers within the box; no part of a number should touch the edge of the box.
- Write carefully, follow style of samples. No extra loops and no overlapping or touching numbers.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

Read each question carefully. Place an X within the box representing your answer. Use a black pen or pencil. Please do not make stray marks of any kind.

CORRECT [X]

1. Fill in your name and address.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

2. Your Date of Birth ____/____/____

3. I certify that I am currently an Active, Educational Support, Reserve, Staff or Life NEA member actively employed in the field of education.

Signature _____ Date

4&5. CAREFULLY PRINT YOUR TELEPHONE NO. AND SOCIAL SECURITY NO. IN THE BOXES. SEE INSTRUCTIONS ABOVE.

4. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Area code and number)

: : : – : : : – : : : :

5. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.

: : : – : : – : : : :

6. A B C D E F

7. A B C D E F G H I J K L

8. A B

9. A B C

10. A B C D

11. A B C D E F G H I J K

12. A B C

13. A B C D E

14. A B C D E F

15. A B C D E F G

OFFICE USE ONLY

FOLD CAREFULLY THEN SEAL OPEN EDGE WITH CLEAR CELLOPHANE TAPE)

RETURN ADDRESS

_____

_____

_____

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

NEA Special Services
Response Center
P.O. Box 248
Hyattsville, MD 20781